

CURATING MEMORY  
9/11 COMMEMORATION AND FOUCAULT'S ARCHIVE

A Thesis

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study of commemoration of 9/11 on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary is performed at the intersection of public memory and rhetorical studies. Examining the role of the individual within public memory, this study furthers both fields by expanding on the definitions, processes, and negotiation between official and vernacular discourse. With a theoretical frame work that uses Foucault's concept of discursive archive, rhetors involved in the creation of public memory are framed as curators of a discursive archive of 9/11 memory. The role and limitations of the curatorial role is explored in three cases studies: a local ceremony, national newspapers, and Twitter hashtags.

The study finds that there is a complicated interaction between vernacular and official memory and narrow definitions of the terms are not sufficient to describe the processes through which individuals take part in public memory. Rhetors involved in the public memory process may take on complex and ambiguous roles within the entangled discourses of official and vernacular memory. Within these case studies, individual curators crafted messages about the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 that reify the importance of individuals tied to particular groups, urge for unity, and focus on the ten years since the tragedies.

To my mother and my grandmother, the strongest women I know

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: CURATING THE ARCHIVE OF 9/11 MEMORY

On September 11, 2001, four planes were hijacked. Buildings were destroyed and people were killed. Americans have been trying to make sense of it ever since. Ten years later, the anniversary evokes another level of sense-making. How do we understand not only 9/11, but the events that followed it? Attempts to understand or redefine the meaning of 9/11 might explain why individuals hundreds of miles away from the tragedy mark the date. The profound affective dimensions of 9/11 cannot be ignored and these may also help to explain the individual's connection to a national event. In a collection of academic essays written a few weeks after September 11, 2001, Norma K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln claim that the emotions invoked in those pages, including fear, anger, and anguish are "timeless" and "universal."<sup>1</sup> Photographer Jonathan Hyman has spent the last decade documenting vernacular remembrances, what he calls "a nation publicly coming to grips with a horrifying and shocking attack, while trying to understand its new sense of vulnerability."<sup>2</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, Americans around the country commemorated with art projects, ceremonies, prayer meetings, and much more.

While the immensity of 9/11 cannot be denied, acknowledging the power entangled with public memory should remind researchers not to accept these vernacular responses as completely pure or only affectively driven. In this project, I seek to explore

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<sup>1</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *9-11 in American Culture* (Walnut Creek, C. A. : AltaMira Press, 2003). xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Hyman, "The Public Face of 9/11: Memory and Portraiture in the Landscape," *Journal of American History* 94(2007).

the ways in which official and vernacular expressions of 9/11 memory are entangled. In doing so, I hope to illuminate the ways in which individuals participate in public memory, including how the individuals have agency to influence public memory within constrained spaces.

I argue that limited definitions of vernacular or official memory, where official memory is the story given by those with the authority and vernacular is seen as the memory of those not in a position of power, do not allow full exploration of how power influences the ways that individuals experience or influence public memory. Instead, an understanding of how individuals can hold ambiguous positions between the two concepts and how the discourse is entangled provides avenues to exploring the processes of individual participation in public memory. Foucault's discursive archive as a theoretical lens provides a way to investigate how the intermingling vernacular and official discourses manifest, as well as a way to develop more fluid definitions of vernacular and official memory. When the vernacular and official discourses are not so divisively separated, we can see that both official and vernacular involvement has the capacity for epideictic and deliberative functions in that they can help people make sense of the present and make choices for the future.

I have examined three separate case studies in order to illustrate this interplay between vernacular and official memory within the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of 9/11. Each chapter presents a unique situation, with different media, creators, and contexts. Displaying the interaction between vernacular and official memory from different perspectives is helpful for three reasons. First, it allows us to more clearly see



the diverse roles individuals perform in the creation of public memory. Second, with each changing context, we can see how the situation can facilitate or limit particular discourses. Finally, examining both vernacular and official commemoration from three separate perspectives can help to further understandings of the rhetorical ways in which public memory is performed. The first chapter begins to complicate the conception of official memory, the second focuses on how vernacular rhetoric interacts with the rules that constrain and direct its expression, and the third chapter looks more closely at the relationship between both vernacular and official forms of memory. After a more detailed overview of each chapter, I situate this study within the literature it builds upon and explain the theoretical approach.

The first chapter is a case study that juxtaposes official ceremonial discourse from the 9/11 anniversary with a local ceremony. I argue for more fluid definitions of vernacular and official memory and that individuals from each group have agency to act as curators of the discursive archive by creating new rhetorical texts from the discourses surrounding an event. This chapter differs from those that follow because rather than looking at the *expression* of memory and how it is conditioned, it shifts to theorizing about the inventional resources available to the individual rhetors. This argument demonstrates how Foucault's archive is a helpful way to study vernacular and official memory when the distinctions between the two have been blurred.

The second chapter is a case study of the rhetoric of official memory in the context of national newspapers in the weeks surrounding the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of September 11, 2001. The case serves to illustrate how stark boundaries of official or

institutional memory are influenced by the practices of the journalism profession. Here, journalists act as curators of the archive producing official texts of 9/11 memory, but to identify them across the board as “official curators” becomes complicated. In this chapter, I theorize that curators use the archive to create new memory texts. Although they are constrained by the boundaries of the archive and the rhetorical situation that includes their profession, journalists as official curators can craft messages from the archive that are not just epideictic, but deliberative as well.

The last chapter is a case study of social media and commemoration. Twitter serves as an open platform that enables a multiplicity of vernacular expression as Twitter users have opportunities to participate without explicit censorship. However, I argue that “pure” vernacular expression does not exist. It is constrained and conditioned by the circumstances of its emergence. Twitter users are constrained by communal norms and the limits of the technology, also the participation of Twitter users can be influenced by institutional forces. By examining more closely the intermingling of vernacular and official memory, I hope to illustrate through this destruction of the entanglement of the two concepts within Twitter hashtags that they cannot be developed as a binary. Instead, more fluid definitions of the two groups are necessary in order to better understand the complex ways in which a discursive archive of 9/11 memory is maintained. In order to understand the complexities of this project, it must be situated within previous scholarship on public memory, official and vernacular discourse, and how power has been theorized in memory studies.

## **Epidictic Rhetoric and Public Memory**

This study looks at the rhetorical dimensions of journalism, digital media, and performative ceremonies, arguing that Aristotle's three categories of rhetoric can be extended to understand public discourse outside of the speech. The three types are deliberative (proposing or arguing policy), judicial (passing judgment on past events), and epideictic (usually ceremonial speeches of praise or blame). In rhetorical studies, commemoration falls under epideictic, which is a useful description of commemorative discourse because it allows rhetoricians to draw parallels between the forms and functions of different addresses over time. Celeste Condit proposed that an epideictic speech is not one that fits a list of particular characteristics, but one that fits into a "family" with similar characteristics.<sup>3</sup> She developed three pairs of terms that illustrate the functions of epideictic speech: definition/understanding, shaping/sharing community, and display/entertainment. The first pair, definition/understanding, indicates how epideictic speeches help audiences make sense of troubling times and this gives the speaker the power to define the event. The second discusses how audiences identify with each other and the speaker through shared symbols. The speaker constitutes a particular community through the shared symbols they choose to present and those they ignore. The final pair accounts for the speaker's display of eloquence and the entertainment value that draws in the audience. Commemorative discourses, as epideictic rhetoric, then have the capacity to perform these three functions.

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<sup>3</sup> Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Functions of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar," *Communication Quarterly* 33, no. 4.

However, remembrances of 9/11 on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary do not always fit neatly into a category of epideictic addresses. Several scholars have argued that sometimes occasions and orators produce speeches that are not pure epideictic on occasions where the traditional ceremony is expected. For example, Denise M. Bostdorff examined George W. Bush's address in 2005 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the victory over Japan. She argues that this speech is but one of many occasions where Bush uses ceremonial occasions and epideictic speech to bolster support for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> In this case, a public remembrance is both deliberative and epideictic. The blending of types of rhetoric is not unusual. Kathleen Hall Jameison and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, argue that these categories can be seen as genres which act as "dynamis- a potential fusion of elements that may be energized or actualized as a strategic response to a situation."<sup>5</sup> They use the term "genre hybrids" to describe how some speeches use a blend of deliberate, forensic, or epideictic address.

Epideictic rhetoric can be powerful and when epideictic speech is commemorative, and thus drawing on the past, the rhetor has the power not only to shape understandings of the past but to give that past particular meanings. When 9/11 is invoked in public discourse, the memory is more powerful. Kendall Phillips argues that "to speak of public memory as the memory of publics is to speak of more than many individuals remembering the same thing. It is to speak of remembrance together, indeed, of remembrance together as a crucial aspect of our togetherness, our existence as a

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<sup>4</sup> Bostdorff, Denise, M. "Epideictic Rhetoric in the Service of War: George W. bush on Iraq and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Victory over Japan." *Communication Monographs*. 78.2. September 2011 296-323

<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamison and Karlyn Kohrs campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68, no. 2 (1982).

public.”<sup>6</sup> Although many scholars in other fields prefer the term collective memory, I, along with other rhetoricians, see an argument for *public* being the more useful modifier. Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott suggest that “‘public’ situates shared memory where it is often the most salient to collectives, in constituted audiences, positioned in some kind of relationship of mutuality that implicates their common interests, investments or destinies, with profound political implications.”<sup>7</sup> As they say, *public* provides a better foundation for discussing the civic nature of shared memories, which is of the utmost importance to a study of 9/11 due to that event’s far-reaching political consequences.

Another way that memory and rhetoric combine forces through the term public is through understandings of the way public memory is material. We can observe shared memory only in its material forms. While *collective* can mean simply one event remembered by several individuals, but never fully expressed, public memory exists only through the expression. Stephen Browne says “public memory lives as it is given expressive form; its analysis must therefore presume a theory of textuality and entail an appropriate mode of interpretation.”<sup>8</sup> Public memory, for the purposes of this study, can be defined as interpretations of events reintroduced in material form by a public for a public.

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<sup>6</sup> Kendall Phillips, ed. *Framing Public Memory*, Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). 4.

<sup>7</sup> Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010).6.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen H. Browne, "Review Essay: Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 2 (1995). 248.

## Vernacular and Official Memory

Within public memory studies, distinctions are made between different types of memory. Edward Casey is one of the few scholars to make a distinction between collective and public memory but of the four types of remembering he has identified (individual, social, collective, and public), individual memory is of more interest here.<sup>9</sup> Rather than completely separating individual memory from the other forms, Casey refers to a more complicated conception of the individual's memory. Individual memory, he acknowledges, is "saturated" with aspects of the other types of remembering, overshadowed by the larger structures in play.<sup>10</sup> However, Casey does not mention the place the actual memories or remembering of individuals may have within the larger framework of public memory. Although Casey is not interested in the production of public memory texts, other studies acknowledge the parts that individuals and collectives play in this process.

In particular, this project focuses on how individuals can be considered vernacular or official. Scholarship of vernacular memory begins with John Bodnar's dichotomy between vernacular and official, which he sees as separate cultures motivated to commemorate by different goals.<sup>11</sup> For Bodnar, public memory is formed in the interweaving of messages from both groups. The official side consists of cultural leaders who want to maintain existing institutions and promote social unity. Individuals in the vernacular culture represent a diversity of interests, which may clash with each other or

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<sup>9</sup> Edward Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). 20-32.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>11</sup> John E. Bodnar, *Remaking America : Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1992).

the official messages of remembrance. Their interests lie in preserving “firsthand experience in small-scale communities rather than the ‘imagined’ communities of a large nation.” Following Bodnar, Aaron Hess uses the idea of vernacular memory to describe the websites he studied, which originated from ordinary people but interact with a larger public.<sup>12</sup> He argues that the vernacular positioning of the website authors “provides a reshaping of public memory from perspectives other than the privileged voices heard through granite and roped-off areas.”<sup>13</sup>

One way to further understandings of how individuals participate in the creation of public memory may be constructing some bridges between vernacular memory and vernacular rhetoric. Literature with a focus on vernacular rhetoric views this term in fairly specific terms within the work’s context. Jennifer Mercieca and James Aune use vernacular as a modifier for republican rhetoric, where vernacular republican rhetoric is not simply that which is not elite but is characterized by a critique and rejection of elite political discourses.<sup>14</sup> For Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, the study of the vernacular takes up a critical goal, as their identification of vernacular rhetoric in marginalized communities’ shows.<sup>15</sup> Connecting this idea to the public sphere, Gerard Hauser argues that vernacular rhetoric is where the manifestation of publics becomes observable. It is through the discourse of publics, which occurs far from the institutional

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<sup>12</sup> A. Hess, "In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials," *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 5 (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 820.

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer R. Mercieca and James Arnt Aune, "A Vernacular Republican Rhetoric: William Manning's 'Key of Liberty'," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1.

forums, that the rhetoric reveals the opinion of these publics.<sup>16</sup> Conceptions of vernacular rhetoric tend to define it as either an everyday rhetoric on the level of conversational discourse or rhetoric from the every man, those not in positions of authority. These conceptions tend to operate within public sphere theory and discussions of political discourse; public memory scholars have justified use of the term by stating that the reason that public memory is different than other conceptions of memory (like individual or collective) is that public memories can constitute publics.<sup>17</sup> In this way, within the public discourse and imagination, 9/11 sparked a new negotiation of what it means to be American within a tragedy that seemed to unite the nation against a common enemy. Public memory may have a presence, “hovering at the edge of lives” and shaping our public lives, but how do individuals outside of powerful institutions use public memory? In *Vernacular Voices*, Gerald Hauser posits that public opinion is not a set of poll data but resides in the everyday discourse of citizens which we can begin to access through the interaction of this discourse with the official voices.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, this project examines how the vernacular and official interact discursively.

Memory scholars, like Bodnar and Hess, locate the vernacular definition within the position of the individual. The vernacular individual is someone who could be considered “ordinary” in this conception. By melding the definition with vernacular rhetoric, we get a sense of “ordinary” people having “everyday” conversations. This can

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<sup>16</sup> Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices : The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999). 14.

<sup>17</sup> See Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* or Dickinson, Blair, & Ott, *Places of Public Memory* for more on the term public memory. Hauser, discussed below, also has a chapter that discusses how memories can shape publics.

<sup>18</sup> Hauser, *Vernacular Voices : The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*.



be a very helpful starting place to theorize, but it becomes difficult to determine who is ordinary and what counts as everyday discourse, especially within a memory context, where those associated with the event have some power to define the story even though they are not official actors. For example, the families of the 9/11 victims may have some voice in the design of the official memorials, and their voices may be privileged in newspaper coverage. Definitions of vernacular must be situational. For the purposes of this project, vernacular memory is the expression of personal memories from individuals or groups not in a privileged role within the context of the public memory.

Bodnar's concept of official culture consists of public officials, usually associated with the government. Public memory scholars have shifted away from this label to use other language, like institutional memory. This shift allows scholars to discuss power in other forms beyond the government, such as that wielded by the media or corporations. For example, Charles E. Morris III makes an eloquent argument for questioning historians' authority. He says that he is not arguing that historians are necessarily "the ballast of hegemonic memory" and serve an important role. Yet there can be dangers in the act of performing this role and "protecting us from memory." "Induced (perhaps unknowingly) by circumstances into the political fray, bolstered by a professional ethos that positions them as arbiters and advocates for memory's struggle, they threaten to become the midwives of the forgotten."<sup>19</sup> Throughout this project, I also argue that the power to define an event does extend beyond the government, and I often

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<sup>19</sup> Charles E. Morris III, "My Old Kentucky Homo: Lincoln and the Politics of Queer Public Memory," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). 106.

use the term “institutional” to highlight this. However, I also think it is important to redeem the adjective “official.” “Institutional” may highlight from where the memory originates, but it does not convey the sense of authority inherent in the term official. An expanded definition of official memory is the expression of memory from individuals or groups in privileged positions within the context of the public memory, possibly including government officials, media organizations, and corporate entities.

### **Power and Memory**

Public memory, as Blair, Dickinson, and Ott point out, is “partial, partisan, and thus highly contested” and so, the individuals and groups who do this contesting feature prominently in memory studies.<sup>20</sup> What decides and sometimes exacerbates these contests of memory is authority. The authority to tell a story, or *the* story, of an event is a powerful position. Kendall Phillips identifies a dynamic between authority and resistance within the field, which is a process or struggle between publics.<sup>21</sup> Bryan Taylor argues that nuclear museums are sites of “entangled rhetoric” as they negotiate claims from the evidence-based discipline of history, the invested memories of individuals or groups, and the preservational impulse of heritage movements.<sup>22</sup> Charles E. Morris also discusses the contestation of several groups for the authority of Lincoln’s memory. He describes the hostile reaction of Springfield residents to claims of Lincoln’s homosexuality as “the rhetorical equivalent of running the ‘outlaw’ memory out of town

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<sup>20</sup>Dickinson, Blair, and Ott, *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*.

<sup>21</sup> Phillips, *Framing Public Memory*.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, Bryan. Bryan C. Taylor, "Radioactive History: Rhetoric, Memory, and Place in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Museum," in *Places of Public Memory : The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010). 65

on a rail.”<sup>23</sup> The struggle for authority over memories is complicated and takes many forms. This study hopes to illuminate ways in which power and authority over memory can be understood through everyday practices of that condition the ways in which we remember. Although this study does not focus on Foucault’s conceptions of power, thinking of power as inherent in discourse and the conditions that guide that discourse can be a helpful way of conceptualizing authority and memory.

### **Foucault & the Archive**

In several ways, this study could be considered a study of discourse at a broader level that extends beyond a series of texts. Indeed, the theoretical lens chosen to provide answers comes from the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, where Michel Foucault responds to critics questioning his methodology. In this book, *Discourse* is made up of *statements* that are enunciated at particular moments. The archive is systems of statements, “a complex volume, in which heterogeneous regions are differentiated or deployed, in accordance with specific rules and practices that cannot be superposed.”<sup>24</sup> Foucault says “the archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass.”<sup>25</sup> The archive “reveals the rules of practice that enables statements to both survive and to undergo

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<sup>23</sup> III, “My Old Kentucky Homo: Lincoln and the Politics of Queer Public Memory.” 100

<sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, ed. Michel Foucault (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). 128.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 129.

regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements.<sup>26</sup>

For an event like 9/11, the archive is indeed fluid and multifaceted. As an event experienced on some level by every American who was alive at the time and as an event that has consistently comes up in public discourse in the 10 years since, individual memories exist but are constantly being shaped by external forces. Individual stories, those of survivors and families in particular, are also entering public discourse. Foucault states that we can never fully understand the archive or get outside of the archive because the archive conditions what we know.

While Foucault describes his project as archaeology, an uncovering of the rules that govern a statement's enunciation, this project is loosely working with those concepts developed by Foucault but with a different focus. In order to find places where a discursive statement ruptures or interrupts the normal flow of discourse, we must first understand the regularities of discourse. Rather than trying to uncover the rules that create the archive, I seek to begin mapping the regularities of the archive and how discursive statements are disciplined by the archive. However, further consideration should be given to the conditions of the statements' emergences. The conditions and domain of appearance of individual statements affect what pieces of the archive are selected as well as in what form they are emitted. This is why curation is an apt metaphor for this discursive project. The creator of a museum exhibit selects from previously existing collections to bring those objects together and craft a new message

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.130.

about an event or place or time period. However, not all public memory texts are created within a discipline or profession. Museum exhibits are but one arena where we find public memory, but even they operate on a discursive level. Foucault's archive allows the scholar to take a step back and study the discourse of the exhibit without knowing the intentions or motivations of the creator. The concept of the archive presents scholars with a way to theorize about the boundaries of such an exhibit and the unconscious processes that created it, even those that the creator is unaware of.

Further investigation into how those who write these news articles, post these tweets, or plan these ceremonies justify or explain their decision-making processes could be very interesting, but it may not be the most helpful way to answer these questions. As Foucault argues, we will never be able to fully explain the archive. It is only through distance and by interrupting the naturalness that investigation can begin. Looking at the motivations or justifications of these producers is not necessary. This project is not focused on understanding why producers do what they do but on the beginnings of a search into the rules that govern the unconscious choices they make. Using the concept of Foucault's archive provides a way to talk about how memories are contested, how certain memory agents have more influence on public memory than others, and how public memory is manifested in texts and speech. Although *the Archeology of Knowledge* is a professed explanation of the methodology Foucault uses, it is not a how-to guide, and how to understand the archive is left fairly ambiguous.

If Foucault's conception of the archive can be used to explain the unconscious rules that govern the creation and use of public memory texts, then rhetorical studies is

one way of approaching the archive. Rhetoric as a discipline is centered on the textual surfaces of our world. Like public memory, discursive statements materialize only through enunciation. As Foucault states, “the statement is always given through some material medium, even if that medium is concealed, even if it is doomed to vanish as soon as it appears.”<sup>27</sup> Also, each enunciation of a statement emerges within its own conditions, and rhetorical studies’ commitment to context helps illuminate those conditions. Rhetorical invention is how an orator finds what to say. In one way, the archive is used as an inventional resource as rhetors retrieve circulating public discourses. On another level, the archive describes the boundaries of discourse, so all discourse is found in the archive. Using rhetorical studies to describe the inventional process and how statements from the archive can generate pathways to understanding the bigger picture.

### **Curating the Archive**

Throughout this project, I argue that closer examination of the complicated nature of power and influence in public memory through the interaction of memory agents is one way of revealing the systems of discourse that makes some expressions of 9/11 seem completely natural. Foucault’s theories of discourse and the archive can be a useful lens for studies at the intersection of rhetoric and public memory. In particular, a discursive archive of memory might help us explain how individuals participate in the creation and use of public memory. For the purpose of this project, the discursive archive is a “density” of statements that defines the boundaries of public memory by

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.100.

constraining the discourse surrounding a particular event.<sup>28</sup> As Foucault suggests and the case studies that follow demonstrate, the archive is fluid, structured, and influenced by power. When a particular event happens, the public draws on already existing discourse to understand it and then, as time passes, the way in which a culture refers to that event changes, but the shift, if noticed, seems natural. This is the archive at work. It is always in flux; with each enunciation the discourse changes but through it all, it maintains a sense of continuity. The archive is structured. The rules and practices that the archive consists of are those which give discourses about past events a sense of naturalness. By determining what is important, the rules of the archive serve not to collect everything but to select and maintain only those statements that fit within existing discourse. What creates and maintains these rules of inclusion/exclusion is power. Extending Foucault's archive illustrates that the archive is fluid, structured, and influenced by power; however, a discursive archive of memory would also be public and thus, in some ways, open to interpretation and change

Curator, with roots in the Latin word for care, is a term used for the manager or caretaker of a museum or archive. Assuming that this role is taken up in regards to the discursive archive can be problematic but very useful. A discursive archive, unlike a material archive, has no single curator. Many people use statements from the archive to create new memory texts, changing in the process the archive itself. This fluidity is still governed by particular rules that transcend individual curators. Unlike the world of galleries and exhibits, curators of the discursive archive do not necessarily have control

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 101.

over the content and expression of the archive. Indeed, Foucault says that a creator - someone who puts something into the archive - can never see the full archive. He says a scholar can never fully explore its limits. Thus, it is safe to say that a curator also does not have these powers.

What then is the role of a curator in the discursive archive of memory? There are two aspects of a curator's position we can apply to the discursive archive. As a manager, the role of the curator is to supervise and direct the collection process as well as the ways in which the archive is displayed or used. For an event as large as 9/11, many individuals or groups can curate their own exhibit. Their task is to assemble discursive statement, not to create them, but through this assembly, they have the potential to affect what discourse is maintained by the rules of the archive. As a guardian, the curator protects and maintains the items of the collection. In the past 10 years, many stories about 9/11 have come out and many events have begun shifting how individuals remember it, the curator maintains the archive by using it, reiterating the discourse that it preserves. In both of the roles of manager and guardian, we see that some form of expression, whether through speech, writing or material, means it is necessary to use or change the archive. The archive, in part due its public nature, can only exist in these forms of expressions. Thus, in both of these roles a curator is always necessarily creating a new memory work. In the three chapters of this project, the role of the curator unfolds, illustrating how curators can reiterate circulated discourses and by creating new texts, reinforce or change the structure of the archive.



## CHAPTER II

### BAGPIPES AND BOY SCOUTS: LOCAL COMMEMORATION OF NATIONAL TRAGEDY

In Pflugerville, Texas on September 11, 2011, groups of boy scouts, girl scouts, and other adolescents began gathering with their parents at the high school. As 7 P.M. drew closer, the parking lot was filling with cars and overflow parking extended to a field across the street. Volunteers wearing red, white, and blue handed community members a program, brochure, and American flag. High school students wearing blue school t-shirts then directed them to their seats in the stands around the open-air football field. Members of the community arrived for a program entitled “Pflugerville Remembers 9/11.” In the previous chapter, I illustrated one way in which the vernacular has a voice in the curation of the 9/11 archive. This chapter further explores the role of the vernacular curator, such as organizers of a small town ceremony, and how vernacular expression intermingles with the official. One way in which Twitter users participated in 9/11 commemoration is by contributing their own memories. In this chapter the question is upon which inventional resources vernacular curators draw on beyond their own personal experiences. The discussion of journalistic commemoration in my first chapter complicated the definition of official memory by discussing the professional constraints. In this chapter, I hope to do the same for the definition of vernacular memory. For, as power structures official rhetoric, the vernacular is also constrained by the bounds of the archive. The memory archive is a public one, to some extent open to any individual motivated to curate their own exhibit of 9/11.

Pflugerville, Texas is just about 18 miles north of the Texas state capitol, population 46, 936.<sup>29</sup> My case study looks at this ceremony organized by members of this suburb of Austin and held in a high school football stadium on September 11, 2011. The residents live far away from New York and few know anyone who died on September 11, yet for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, they felt moved to hold a memorial ceremony in their town. As I show, they have used the archive to craft a ceremony for their community and used their own experiences of 9/11 to do so. Pflugerville, Texas was not the only city in the nation to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. In fact, the content of the ceremony is perhaps what one would expect from a small town commemoration. The town's ceremony was chosen after careful research into Texas cities proximate to the researcher's location. The length and breadth of the program distinguishes it from prayers or other forms of commemoration in the cities surrounding it. This case study seeks to show that whether or not the rhetoric of this ceremony is unique or repeated in every ceremony across the nation, the enunciation of these particular discursive statements illustrates how pervasive the archive is and also how the context of a particular enunciation allows curators the agency to craft particular messages. Complicating John Bodnar's arguments about official and vernacular cultures, I argue that the heavy use of patriotism is not a reinforcement of the status quo but an expression of the dissatisfaction with the current state of events. The organizers of the Pflugerville ceremony create this ceremony using inventional resources from a discursive archive that is heavily influenced by rhetoric from official sources. After a

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<sup>29</sup> United States Census Bureau, "State & Country Quickfacts - Pflugerville (City), Texas," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/48/4857176.html>.

brief discussion of vernacular and official memory, I overview certain sets of texts to show the nature of official commemoration of 9/11 before discussing how the Pflugerville ceremony strategically uses similar messages.

When John Bodnar looks at vernacular culture, he sees “ordinary people” expressing what they feel the world is actually like as opposed to the more idealistic visions of the official culture. The cultural leaders, who Bodnar labels “official,” do not just reside in national positions of power but at every level of society. The teachers, military leaders, and local leaders, all could fit in the official category, where these leaders have a “shared interest in social unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo.”<sup>30</sup> This chapter challenges Bodnar’s clear distinction between vernacular and official cultures with a case study of a local commemoration ceremony. The organizers and speakers of the program are, to an extent, part of the official culture expressing an ideal view of the world through social unity and a dependence on the status quo, but it is not that simple. This situation differs from the commemorations that Bodnar discusses because of the sense of space and the unique way that 9/11 was experienced on a national level. In the Texas town of Pflugerville, they do not have much claim to what is being constructed as the official narrative of 9/11.

### **Official Ceremonies**

To construct the beginning understandings of the official discourse that serves as a part of the archive from which 9/11 memorial planners are influenced, I looked at two different forms of official rhetoric. First, I provide an overview the ceremonies at the

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<sup>30</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America : Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*.

disaster site in New York. These ceremonies, as discussed below, set the standards for official commemorative ceremonies of New York. The second set of texts I examine are presidential addresses given on the anniversaries of 9/11. Both of these groups are forms of official commemoration that arguably influence how memories of 9/11 are preserved.

A survey of official commemoration of 9/11 begins with the first anniversary ceremony in New York City. Describing the ceremony as “the most important U.S. civic commemoration of the present era,” Bradford Vivian argues the ceremony planners “established official precedents concerning how future generations would memorialize and thereby derive models for judgment and action from the September 11 atrocities.”<sup>31</sup> The ceremony begins with the NYPD band marching in, featuring several kilt-wearing bagpipers. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg gives a few lines to introduce a ceremony bereft of original speeches. Most of the ceremony features individuals reading names from the list of those who perished in the World Trade Center a year before, with a string quartet playing softly. This reading is occasionally interrupted by the chiming of bells and a moment of silence, followed by a family member of a victim reading a poem or a quote. Public officials past and present take part in the ceremony by reading names or, as Vivian highlights, reading historical documents or speeches. For example, New York’s governor reads Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

However, this first official memorial ceremony not only draws on topoi of tradition, it establishes a rhetorical form that, in turn, acts as its own set of topoi for future commemorations. Indeed, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony in the same location

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<sup>31</sup> Bradford Vivian, “Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Forms and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (2002). 2.

takes a very similar form, although the content shifts slightly. The majority of the ceremony is the reading from the list of names, interspersed with personal messages from family members. The texts read by public officials are not original. For example, President Obama reads a Psalm. The bagpipes are still out in force.

Vivian focuses on the form of the ceremony as an inventional commonplace of tradition to argue the ceremony is a prominent example of neoliberal epidictic. He argues that this form “is defined by its celebration of presumably fundamental political principles in an ostensibly nonpolitical idiom highly conducive to corporate media dissemination.” The features of the official ceremonies in New York are the naming of the victims, messages from the family members, public officials reading traditional texts, and moments of silence. The prominent feature of the victim’s names and their family members memories create a very personal ceremony amplified to a national audience.

Expanding beyond the ceremonies at the World Trade Center site, presidential memorial speeches on the anniversaries of the 9/11 tragedies also serve as possible topoi for future commemorations. Although 9/11 allusions appear in other presidential speeches, I selected those made on the anniversary because they are the only ones given for the purpose of remembrance. There are distinct differences between Bush’s speeches on the anniversaries and those Obama gave up to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While Bush’s speeches have greater variation between them due to different situations and the passage of time, Obama, in three speeches in three years, does not fluctuate much. A majority of Bush’s speeches are not strictly memorial speeches, but reports on the status of the War on Terror.

Speeches given by Bush include a 6 month anniversary speech delivered on the lawn of the White House, a first anniversary address on Ellis Island, New York, a radio address delivered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, a speech delivered from the Oval Office on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the last of his presidency, the Pentagon Memorial dedication ceremony delivered in 2008. The 9/11 anniversaries in 2003, 2005, and 2007 are not marked by presidential speeches. President Obama gave speeches each year of his residency, respectively.

The first four speeches, given in the period between March 11, 2002 and September 11, 2006, all have common themes that tie them together. The greatest similarity is that in all four speeches, Bush spends a majority of the speech giving an update on the War on Terror. Although with each anniversary the events of the war are different, the way in which Bush presents the motivations, current status, and outcome of the war remain the same.

Six months after 9/11, President George W. Bush presents some remarks and in the first few lines, he provides a way of making sense of current events. He welcomes his audience to the White House and explains the purpose of the occasion. "We have come together to mark a terrible day, to reaffirm a just and vital cause, and to thank the many nations that share our resolve and will share in our common victory."<sup>32</sup> In that sentence, the tone for the entire speech is set. The date, an anniversary of horrific tragedies may call for a ceremonial address, but President Bush's speech that day and on subsequent anniversaries does not belong in a memorial service. They are status reports

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<sup>32</sup>George W. Bush, "Remarks on the Six-Month Anniversary of the September 11th Attacks," in *The American Presidency Project* (2002).

of the War on Terror, where the focus is on the international battlefield. The victims of the tragedy are rarely discussed, but America's role in acquiring the "justice their death requires" is central to the moment. In this speech, 9/11 is the beginning of something, not an end.

At this point in the War on Terror, Bush claims that the United States has liberated the Afghan people and terrorists are then fleeing that state. Stage two of the war demands participation from international governments to eradicate terrorism hiding within their own countries. Bush states in several ways that weapons of mass destruction will not be tolerated. "The terrorists will remember September 11<sup>th</sup> as the day their reckoning began," Bush states. Within this frame of 9/11, Bush has a way to speak about America's military endeavors rather than the attack's victims, he can rename 9/11 as a beginning rather than an end, and he can discuss events in the past six months rather than that day. All of this rhetoric builds to a conclusion that the only possible outcome of the war is success. Bush's transformation of a ceremonial occasion into an opportunity for more information dissemination resonates with Stephen Hartnett and Jennifer Mercieca's argument that Bush's rhetoric constitutes a "post-rhetorical presidency," where a barrage of "(dis)information" replaces traditional presidential addresses and positions audience members as bewildered spectators to his agenda.<sup>33</sup>

"I see a peaceful world beyond the War on Terror, and with courage and unity, we are building that world together." This glorious victory is the only outcome described

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<sup>33</sup> Stephen John Hartnett and Jennifer Rose Mercieca, "'A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great'; or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in an Age of Empire," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4.

in his speeches. What makes this speech distinct from any of the others in this study is who is contributing to the success. This speech is directed at enlisting help from the international community. The collective “we” that is building the bright future is not the American people or the American military, but the international coalition that is bringing down terrorism worldwide. The only individual mentioned in this speech, excepting public leaders, is a member of the Australian Special Air Service who died in Afghanistan.

On September 11, 2002, the first anniversary, Bush addressed the nation from Ellis Island, New York.<sup>34</sup> His audience is American people, not the international community, yet the focus is still on the ongoing War on Terror. However, this speech has more commemorative facets, honoring those who died in the attacks and the struggles of those who live with the outcomes. Loss is the focus of a few lines, but the speech encourages Americans not to just grieve but to look forward. The victims of 9/11 shall not be forgotten, but “we owe them and their children, and our own, the most enduring monument we can build, a world of liberty and security made possible by the way America leads and by the way Americans lead our lives.” This debt will be paid, Bush insinuates, by the War on Terror.

The status report of the war is still here in this speech, but presented in abstract terms. The attack was against the ideals of the nation: valuing life, freedom and opportunity for everyone. Thus, the actions of the American military so far have challenged those who would stand against those ideas and brought the “lamp of liberty”

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<sup>34</sup> George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation from Ellis Island, New York, on the Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks of September 11," (The American Presidency Project 2002).



to those under the power of tyrants. America has taken an idealistic stance against those who would oppose our “tolerant and just” mission. Within the context of an attack against those ideals and a debt to those who suffered from that attack, the mission becomes necessary. The mission is also God-given. “We do not know what lies ahead,” Bush says, “Yet, we do know that God has placed us together in this moment.” The purpose of which is to grieve, stand, and serve for “a duty we have been given, defending America and our freedom.”

This vision of the War on Terror uses “god terms” like freedom and liberty to reassure Americans that the cause is necessary and worth the fight.<sup>35</sup> Similar terms are also used to show that the outcome will be success. The speech ends with these lines:

Our country is strong, and our cause is even larger than our country. Ours is the cause of human dignity, freedom guided by conscience and guarded by peace. This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.

This first anniversary speech has a different rhetorical situation and a different audience than the speech Bush gave six months prior, but the War on Terror is still the central focus. The motivations that brought us to this war started at 9/11, America is currently fighting a good fight, and the ultimate outcome will be success.

No special speeches were made for the second anniversary, but in 2004, on the third anniversary President Bush gave a radio address from the Oval Office.<sup>36</sup> It was brief, but the common themes continue. He begins, “Three years ago, the struggle of good and evil was compressed into a single morning.” September 11<sup>th</sup> was the “turning

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<sup>35</sup> M. Weaver Richard and Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Chicago, H. Regnery Co., 1953).

<sup>36</sup> George W. Bush, "President's Radio Address," in *White House Online Archives* (2004).

point” where “our nation accepted a mission: we will defeat this enemy.” These few lines serve to reiterate why we began the War on Terror. The updates on the war include the release of the 9/11 Commission report two months prior. From this, Bush says, “our country is safer than we were three years ago, but we are not yet safe.” In a break from the other speeches included in this study, Bush extends the country’s gratefulness to those keeping us safe, including those who work at airports, border patrol, the CIA and the FBI. The President turns from these discussions of national safety, to say that “the United States is determined to stay on the offensive.” This leads into the updates on the Middle East and the country’s counter-terrorism measures around the world like the previous speeches.

The outcome is still the same but toned down. Less ‘god terms’ are used in this speech and he uses more adjectives that describe the ongoing struggle rather than the outcome. “By our commitment and sacrifice today,” Bush says, “we will help transform the Middle East, and increase the safety of our children and grandchildren.” The speech ends with “three years after the attack on our country, Americans remain strong and resolute, patient in a just cause, and confident of the victory to come.” This shift from the idealistic vision of earlier anniversary speeches to discussions of safety and patience, signal the movement of time and military endeavors about to enter their fifth year. Bush is acknowledging that span of time and for the first time, dedicating a part of his speech to those who are fighting in the war. He says “the sacrifices in the War on Terror have fallen most heavily on the members of our military, and their families.” In this speech,

we see the War on Terror still as the central focus of the 9/11 anniversary in presidential speeches, but time is beginning to change the tone of the speech.

The last speech of this group is an extensive speech given at the oval office in 2006.<sup>37</sup> On this fifth anniversary, even the speech's title, "Address to the Nation on the War on Terror," reveals the main topic. This speech continues to frame 9/11 as the impetus of current military endeavors, uses the occasion to defend those actions, and allows for only an idealistic outcome. Giving a few sentences illustrating that he has seen how Americans are still grieving that day, Bush's claims present this as the reason we are fighting. "Out of this suffering, we resolve to honor every man and woman lost, and we seek their lasting memorial in a safer and more hopeful world." He discusses why America moved into Iraq and answers that because Saddam Hussein's regime was a clear threat. What that threat was is never explained, but the gift of democracy America gave the Iraqi people is quickly brought up and then references to democratic practices continue throughout the rest of the speech. Bush claims, "one of the strongest weapons in our arsenal is the power of freedom" and what we are fighting for is "to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations." Victory is still ensured, he claims, in part because of the courage and sacrifice of the servicemen, who he takes a minute to acknowledge. In the end, "the clouds of war will part, the appeal of radicalism will decline, and we will leave our children with a better and safer world."

This fifth anniversary speech provides examples to talk about the two other common themes in Bush's anniversary speeches. Other than using the event as a

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<sup>37</sup>"Address to the Nation on the War on Terror," in *The American Presidency Project* (University of California Santa Barbara, 2006)..

platform to frame the War on Terror, Bush also constitutes the American people in a particular way and uses religious rhetoric to reinforce his authority. “On 9/11” President Bush said during this speech,” our nation saw the face of evil.” However, he continues to argue that something distinctly American presented itself as well- the courage of the American people.<sup>38</sup>

In these four speeches, given in the five years after 9/11, several similarities appear. The War on Terror is central to President Bush’s speeches on the anniversary of 9/11. He presents 9/11 as an attack on American goodness and the War on Terror as the way to create a safe and free world. His updates on the progress of this war illustrate his claim that we have been and will be successful in achieving this vision. None of these speeches are given at the disaster sites. The last speech, delivered at the Pentagon memorial ceremony, differs from the previous speeches not only in location and exigence but also in the form it takes, which focuses more on the place and people affected by 9/11 than the war that followed. In the five years following, both Bush and his successor, Barack Obama, would not present speeches on the anniversary in which the War on Terror was the main focus. Instead, the speeches given are at memorial services, which may account for the shift to a more ceremonial form.

September 11, 2008 is the first anniversary where an official memorial is complete at a site of the 9/11 tragedy.<sup>39</sup> Bush’s speech, the only one he gives on this anniversary, is constrained by the purpose of the ceremony- dedicating the memorial. As

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia," in *The American Presidency Project* (University of California Santa Barbara, 2008).

such, there are several distinct differences that signal an interruption in the patterns in his anniversary speeches thus far. The topic is finally attuned to the occasion of the dedication, so the memorial is in focus, but this invocation of the place on this occasion also allows Bush to direct how the memorial is viewed.

Bush discusses the memorial's construction and creates an image of Americans working together to craft it, including an Iraqi immigrant in Illinois who "gave the metal its luster." To acknowledge and address the families and friends of victims, he talks about the memorial as a place of remembrance. "For all our citizens," he says "this memorial will be a reminder of the resilience of the American spirit." Exemplars of the American spirit are, of course, the first responders, Flight 93 passengers, etc. The "heroes" of 9/11 are honored for their bravery and the Armed Forces are next in line. The last invocation of the place is the only one, other than the armed forces mentioned in the proceeding lines, that refers directly to the War on Terror. This moment does not call for the list of accomplishments so far in the war but by describing the memorial as a "place of learning" for future generations, Bush can reiterate the points from earlier speeches. In these lines, he gets to describe not just how the memorial, but also how the years following 9/11, should be remembered. He says,

When they visit this memorial, they will learn that the 21st century began with a great struggle between the forces of freedom and the forces of terror. They will learn that this generation of Americans met its duty. We did not tire; we did not falter; and we did not fail. They will learn that freedom prevailed because the desire for liberty lives in the heart of every man, woman, and child on earth.

This passage not only displays how Bush uses the dedication ceremony and the focus on that place to reiterate previous frames for his administration's actions after 9/11, but it

also brings into focus Bush's constitution of the American people. We see that the War on Terror is being fought because we are the force for freedom, Americans are dutiful in the present, and in the future, we will win because we believe in our ideals. He echoes his visions of success in the next few lines and includes the god terms, liberty, peace, justice, and freedom. However, this beautiful future is provided by those who defend liberty and those who have volunteered to spread the foundation of peace and liberty. Americans throughout this are dutiful and resilient. This constitution of the American people is one of three functions of epideictic speech outlined by Celeste Condit.<sup>40</sup> By drawing on supposedly shared values of the audience, Bush is arguing that his audience should exemplify the character traits he sees in them.

Just a few months after Bush dedicated the Pentagon memorial, the American people elected a new president. Barack Obama's speeches on 9/11 anniversaries deviate from Bush's more deliberative updates on the War on Terror to an address that is more clearly epideictic. The themes shift. The resolve of the American people is no longer presented as a given. Instead, President Obama uses a metaphor beginning with Biblical restoration and ending with national renewal.

Obama's first 9/11 address as President of the United States takes place at the Pentagon Memorial.<sup>41</sup> He begins by marking the dates, but saying that "no passage of time and no dark skies can ever dull the meaning of this moment." Then, the next few sections claim "we remember with reverence the lives we lost," then, "we honor all

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<sup>40</sup> Condit, "The Functions of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar."

<sup>41</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial," (White House Website, 2009).

those who gave their lives so that others might live,” and finally “we pay tribute to the service of a new generation.” Thus, the three groups who Bush also honored, victims/families, heroes, and servicemen are all honored here as well. Next, the Biblical reference to restoration allows a transition from the families who will be restored after suffering to the nation, which needs renewal. What needs to be renewed? Obama uses the restoration theme to urge his audience to renew its resolve against the terrorists, to renew its commitment to the Armed Forces, to renew the “true spirit of the day,” and to renew “our common purpose.” Although American resolve was not questioned in Bush’s speech the year before, here Obama references it as if it is waning. The same themes have not disappeared; indeed, even Obama claims that the American nation had these characteristics at one point.

The last two pieces of this formula show how Obama repeated Bush’s illustrations of what 9/11 means and then moved beyond. The “true spirit of the day” is “not the desire to destroy, but the impulse to save, to serve, and to build.” However, this spirit must be renewed, which everyday Americans can do by serving their communities, strengthening the nation, and bettering the world. This description of how Americans can renew the spirit leads into the next section, which focuses on unity. “Let us remember how we came together as one nation, as one people, as Americans, united not only in our grief, but in our resolve to stand with one another, to stand up for the country we all love.”

Speaking again at the Pentagon Memorial in 2010, Obama continues with those themes. He nominates the day, saying “For our nation, this is a day of remembrance, a

day of reflection, and –with God’s grace—a day of unity and renewal.” The victims are portrayed as everyday Americans, virtuous and innocent. He urges his audience to reflect on the evil done on 9/11 and to remain true to American values. Americans are resilient. They have responded to tragedies by participating in a national day of service. America’s goodness is praised. He states,

Those who attacked us sought to demoralize us, divide us, to deprive us of the very unity, the very ideals, that make America America—those qualities that have made us a beacon of freedom and hope to billions around the world. Today we declare once more we will never hand them that victory. As Americans, we will keep alive the virtues and values that make us who we are and who we must always be.

Obama says Americans can honor the victims by renewing their commitment to that fight.

For the 2011 anniversary of 9/11, President Obama spoke at a memorial service held at the Kennedy Center. This speech marks the passage of a decade, looking back to the days when “we woke to a world in which evil was closer at hand” and the years that have followed. “In the decade since, much has changed for Americans,” yet the character, faith, and belief in America have only been strengthened. Americans are praised for not giving into fear, for their courage and resilience. With that resilience, comes dealing with the sacrifices that come with service. Looking to the future, Obama states “Decades from now... they’ see the memorials and they will know that nothing can break the will of a truly United States of America.” Using the epideictic orator’s power to define the moment, Obama says, “That is what we honor on days of national commemoration--- those aspects of the American experience that are enduring, and the



determination to move forward as one people. More than monuments, that will be the legacy of 9/11.”

### **Pflugerville Ceremony**

In Texas, the citizens of Pflugerville had their ceremony just hours apart from Obama’s address at the Kennedy Center. After a brief description of the event, I discuss how this local ceremony is similar to the ones in New York, but the differences between Pflugerville and the national ceremony subvert the neoliberal epideictic Vivian discusses. The planners use moments from the ceremonies and themes from presidential addresses to craft a ceremony that serves the needs of their community, not the nation. In these moments, the discursive archive of 9/11 commemoration allows the Pflugerville planners the freedom to select messages with a national ethos to reinforce their ceremony. This new production introduces to the discursive archive a framing of events for a very small population, a ritual that is not without its own constraints. Although the ceremony is planned by community leadership and adopts many national themes, this ceremony does not fit neatly into Bodnar’s official or vernacular cultures.

The ceremony was organized months before and advertised for several weeks ahead of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. Announcements ran in the local paper, the *Pflugerville Pflag*. Banners stretched across Pecan Street, the busy road where the high school is located. These banners had room to announce very little except the website created for the event, Pflguervillerememebers911.com.<sup>42</sup> The website had considerably more information about the ceremony but also a place for visitors to post their own

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<sup>42</sup> Defunct at the time of this writing.

memories of 9/11. It greeted guests with dramatic red, white, and blue backgrounds, flag graphics, and Alan Jackson's "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)" playing when loaded.

In an interview with a local news channel, Austin-based KVUE, Pflugerville's Mayor Jeff Coleman and Pflugerville Remembers Organizer Jean Garlick continued to stir up interest the day before the event. The story of the creation of the ceremony, as told by Mayor Coleman, is one of Jean Garlick coming to the city council with an idea and the community working together to produce the event. Ms. Garlick describes her motivation as a desire for the community to return to the "patriotic unity" she remembers from the aftermath of 9/11. Mayor Coleman says that the city council was eager to participate because the town is patriotic "at its core." Further explaining their motivations, he says, "It really helps us solidify our community and it keeps us that small town, which is something we're always trying to do."<sup>43</sup>

The events of the next day clearly reveal these motivations as well. Before the Mayor officially opens the ceremony, Jean Garlick steps up to the podium to thank the community and introduce a mother of a fallen soldier, who reads a letter from former President George W. Bush. It is unclear to whom the letter is addressed. Indeed, no one says whether it is a letter simply made public or one sent directly to a community member. Holding American flags and led by a kilted bagpipe player, boy scouts and school children parade in. The colors are presented, a local Pastor delivers the benediction, and the Pledge of Allegiance and "Star Spangled Banner" precede the

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<sup>43</sup> "Pflugerville to Host a Special 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony Sunday Night," (KVUE-TV Austin 2011).

invited speaker, Captain Brian Payne. The last portion of the ceremony is called the remembrance, which goes through a timeline of 9/11 events. With a rousing rendition of “God Bless America” and a final prayer, the ceremony comes to an end.

*Comparing the Ceremonies- Drawing on the Archive*

While the Pflugerville ceremony creators may not have watched the national ceremonies or read President Bush’s speeches in preparation for their own ceremony, as Vivian says, the official rhetoric on national events has a powerful influence on the public memory of that event and thus, a powerful influence on the discursive archive from which the Pflugerville creators would make choices. The features of the official ceremonies, as described above, are the naming of victims, personal messages from family members, public officials reading traditional texts, and moments of silence. Very few of these are found in the Pflugerville ceremony. What are similar are the ritualistic symbols of memorial services, with a bit of local flair. For example, in New York they had a large bagpipe band marching in to begin the ceremony. In Pflugerville, a lone bagpipe player leads a long line of boy scouts, girl scouts, and members of the high school band/choir. The moments of silence as a sign of respect are repeated here, along with the chiming of the bell. These signs of respect are not original to the memorial services in New York but, rather, common features of modern American funeral rituals. This suggests that rather than one ceremony overtly influencing the other, both ceremonies draw on the ritualistic symbols of mourning to give the occasion the appropriate solemnity.

Indeed, with these rituals being the only clear similarity between the two ceremonies, the differences are striking. Although the archive defines how 9/11 is remembered, the process is not a simple one. As a loci of invention, curators retrieve statements about 9/11, but which statements emerge cannot always be controlled. Vernacular curators can select pieces of 9/11 discourse and arrange them within the familiar frames of epideictic ceremonies to serve their own political purposes. This can be illustrated through the discord between two ceremonies held on the same day that present such divergent messages.

The features of both ceremonies that best illustrate how the national and the local converge and diverge are the timelines or the marking of moments within the ceremony. In New York, the ceremonies have been held in the morning. Bells ring at particular times, to mark the points where the airplanes hit the towers. Parallel to the events of 2001, this timeline of events, given in sequential order, is best explained by *chronos* or chronological time in the ancient Greek conception. In these ceremonies, those moments serve to build a temporal bridge between the past and the present. Those moments also work under the second Greek conception of time, *kairos* or the opportune moment. *Kairos* is the moment that is special, marked to stand out from the chronological flow of time. As the ceremonies are predominated by the naming of the victims, the bells and the silence serve as an interruption of the flow of the ceremony. In a similar fashion, the lives of those being named were interrupted by the events the moments are meant to mark, planes crashing into buildings and towers collapsing.

The ceremony in Texas also features a timeline that plays with both kairos and chromos. Following the invited speaker, Mayor Coleman steps up to the podium. "In the moments to come, we will do a timeline of November-- September the 11th." The mayor announces, "I would ask at the times where silence is appropriate that you be silent and that the times where emotion is appropriate that you feel free to express emotion." The mayor then proceeds to read a timeline of the events of the morning of September 11, 2001. Each statement is preceded by the time, "At 8:45 A. M.," "at 9:03 A.M.," etc. Although after the first three points, the next four drop the twelve-hour clock notation.

At the appropriate times, the Mayor says that Flight 11 and then Flight 175 "crashed into" the north or south towers. The building is only referred to as the World Trade center once; afterwards it is "the burning building" or one of the two towers. When noting the plane and its passengers, their numbers are often repeated twice. First, when he introduces the plane, "United Airlines Flight 175 with 65 people on board." Then, in the second sentence which acknowledges the number of the victims, he repeats the number of passengers in addition to others that died. For example, the last sentence of the 9:03 mark is such, "the 65 people on the plane and an unknown number of people in the tower immediately lost their lives." The mayor's timeline is but the frame for the actors' performance. At the first time on the list, 8:45 when Flight 11 crashes into the south tower, a number of the actors representing those on the Flight kneel when the number of victims is recited. A student in the band on the side of field hits a large bell four times.

The first time noted, 8:45, is the first plane crash, but before the next crash is mentioned, the first responders are introduced to the timeline. “At 8:47 A.M.,” the mayor says, “police, fire fighters, and EMS personnel begin to rush onto the scene and into the burning building.” Uniformed actors, who had been previously standing separate from and behind the other actors, now walk forward to join the group representing those in the tower. The audience is silent while the mayor pauses, allowing the actors a moment to complete their movement. The third mark, 9:03, marks the second Flight’s crash, more actors kneel, and the bell chimes when the mayor pauses.

He moves from an active to a passive voice for the first time when noting that “the Pentagon was hit by American Airlines Flight 77.” The number of passengers on that plane is mentioned after the total and before the number of “military and civilian personnel on the ground at the Pentagon.” This second sentence also uses the passive voice. Here the mayor says “were killed” as opposed to the earlier “lost their lives.” Another group of actors kneel and the bell chimes four times. The next two times, 9:59 and 10:28, designate the “horrible” and “horrific” collapse of the towers. There are no numbers of victims here, but they are remembered with the phrase “an unknown number.” The victims are distinguished as “civilians, EMS, police, and firefighters.” The passive phrase, “were killed,” continues. When the mayor pauses after both places on the timeline, the bell rings four times.

The last mark on the timeline is 10:37, Flight 93. The first sentence here follows a similar format to the first two plane crashes: time, flight, number of people on board, “crashes,” in location. The number of passengers is not repeated again, rather “all of the

people on board are killed.” The bell rings four times and then two trumpet players begin to play “Taps,” a song traditionally played in a similar fashion at military funerals.

There are similarities, such as the bells and the moments of silence, with the national ceremony. In the local ceremony, held in the evening, they do not have the parallel moments in a place where the tragedies struck to build a bridge between the past and the present. Presenting the timeline in a more concentrated form with the exact times announced, serves this function to some extent. With *chromos*, or sequential understanding of time, comes a force of fact. The bald statements of the events also contribute to the sense that these events are truth and, as such, can hardly be argued with. However, the fact that they have been selected out plays into a sense of *kairos*. These are the special moments. For example, Pflugerville notes moments when first responders arrived on scene. This moment is not marked in the national ceremony- only planes, crashing into buildings and fields. So, although a timeline feature can be found in both national and local ceremonies, they serve very different functions.

For the national, marking those moments serves as a direct tie to the past, both with the parallel times and the interruption of the victims. In Pflugerville, *chromos* provides less of a tie to the past and more of a sense of truth, but *kairos* provides a selection of particular moments not recognized in the national ceremony. For the local community, far away from New York City, those particular moments marked in the timeline have a pronounced role that overshadows those who died in 2001. In the Pflugerville ceremony, the victims are never named. They are identified as a collective, either as a whole or as in the performance above attached to a group like Flight 93 or

first responders. This abstraction of the victims allows the creators of the Pflugerville ceremony a way to make the victims' memories useful for their community. The collected victims are praised for their heroism, exemplified by the courage they showed stopping hijackers and rushing into dangerous situations. This is shown in the next section of this remembrance performance where the courage of those who died on 9/11 is praised because it united the country.

The timeline has ended, but the performance has not. As the trumpet fades, the tone of the presentation changes with the mayor's next words. "Before Flight 93 crashed," he says:

the passengers on board, aware of the other hijackings, but unaware that their plane was planned to crash into the White House, decided to take the plane back with the now famous phrase, "let's roll." They succeeded and the hijackers did not reach their destination, but can only crash the plane into the field. On that day, September 11th, two-thousand and first- 2001, the heroic people on Flight 93, united us.

The corresponding group of actors stands from their kneeling positions to wave their American flags high above their heads. The audience applauds.

The next sentence echoes the previous. "On that day," the mayor says, with an emphasis on the date, and informs the audience that the heroic first responders, "who were fighting to get into buildings everyone else was fighting to get out of, united us!" Those in uniforms of the mentioned groups rise to wave their flags. The next statement is inclusive of the entire cast of actors, "the innocent civilians, first responders, and military personnel who died. On that day, they united us." As more and more of the actors are standing, the mayor's declarations get more emphatic and the audience response builds incrementally. By the time all of the actors have risen, the audience in



the stadium benches is standing, cheering, and waving their own flags. Over the applause, the mayor gives his final statement. “And on September 11, 2011, may we remain united in remembrance and may God bless America.” The emotional high smoothly transitions into a rousing rendition of “God Bless America.”

*Strategic Retrieval from the Archive- Presidential Rhetoric*

The themes that have emerged so far, praising the victims for their courage and urging national unity, did not come from the official ceremonies at Ground Zero. Both of these actions were seen in other texts on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, demonstrating that statements retrieved by the archive can be used in multiple ways. However, these discourses emerged from somewhere. Foucault discourages searching for an endless origin of discursive statements.<sup>44</sup> That endeavor distracts from the questions that the archive puts forward: how do the rules of the archive condition some statements so that they remain prominent in the archive? How do statements not only remain circulating in the public sphere but attain the appearance of truth stable enough that multiple sources use it unquestioningly? The answer is power. Scholars of presidential address argue that presidential rhetoric has the power to define. David Zarefsky provides 9/11 as one example of this. Bush’s rhetoric created associations between the war and September 11. Like other presidential definitions, this view of the war was “offered as if it were natural and uncontroversial rather than chosen and contestable.”<sup>45</sup> I argue that the rhetorical power of the presidency can account for the prevalence of discourse propagated by those

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<sup>44</sup> Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. 80.

<sup>45</sup> David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (2004). 612

who take a curatorial role within the archive. Pflugerville, retrieving statements from the archive to craft a ceremony that fits their needs, uses themes in common with both George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

The praise of the victim's courage echoes the major focus of the Pflugerville ceremony which I argue is the community's role in present American military endeavors. Having established courage as an exemplary value, it can be applied to other situations with links more tenuous to the occasion of the 9/11 anniversary. Making the connection between 9/11 and the War on Terror seem completely natural is something Bush did over and over again in his 9/11 commemorations.

Although the professed reason for the ceremony is to remember 9/11, the Pflugerville ceremony actually does more to remember the decade that has passed since. This can be clearly seen in the choice of inviting Captain Brian Payne, a soldier stationed at Fort Hood with no apparent ties to Pflugerville, to be the main speaker. Throughout his speech, Payne talks about soldiers. They answer the call of duty, Payne states. "As service members, we have our own ideals, we have our own beliefs, and we have our own opinions, but when an order is given and a task is laid before us we will fight to the death to complete that mission." Also, soldiers and their families sacrifice. Payne uses quotations to reinforce this point. "The Greek philosopher Herodotus once wrote, 'In peace sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons.' Over the last decade, this nation, in defense of our freedom, our very way of life, has buried more than 6,000 of its sons and daughters who answered the call of duty and gave their lives in defense of our country."

Bush is invoked explicitly in two parts of the ceremony. The first is a letter read by Janet Norwood, who is introduced as “one of Pflugerville’s gold star mothers.” The story of Ms. Norwood’s son, a Marine who died in Iraq, is told later by the invited speaker. Ms. Norwood simply reads a letter. Its origins are not given, but the words overlap closely with Bush’s speech at the Shanksville memorial the day before.

Later, Captain Payne depicts the collective memories of 9/11. We all watched on TV, remember the moment we first heard, and felt a sense of “utter disbelief,” he says. “Families gathered together to grieve and that evening, we looked to the President of the United States for answers, for comfort, for a simple way ahead.” Captain Payne has selected a quote from Bush’s address to the nation on the evening of September 11, 2001 which discusses how “a great people have been moved to defend a great nation” and with a still firm foundation they are resolved to fight.

Both these mentions of Bush deliver a proper transition from the stated purpose of the ceremony and remembering 9/11 to the local exigence- a desire for a united community and a need to make sense of neighbors’ deaths. The motivations that Jean Garlick and Mayor Coleman expressed -patriotic unity and joining together as a community- are tied more to a remembrance of the community’s experience with the events and aftermath of 9/11 than that of the victims or officials. The abundant patriotic symbols are part of this as well. They adopt and invoke the national spirit but are used to commemorate soldiers’ deaths and encourage a return to the support for the soldiers expressed after 9/11.

These references to the war and the celebration of soldiers are an important part of the Pflugerville ceremony, but they work in conjunction with other shared symbols. The patriotism of flags and anthems are but one way that the national ethos is invoked. A local ceremony in a situation like this must look to national themes in order to justify its creation. This is not a memorial service for local heroes, but a carefully crafted ceremony that connects not just the present to the past, but the local to the national in order to reinforce the community. “We serve, we fight, and sometimes we die, so that the United States of America can continue to be the greatest nation in the world,” Captain Payne said. The Pflugerville ceremony differs from the presidential speeches because the members of this small community do not have to talk about international relationships or make political moves. They can commemorate the death of their own. The only personal story highlighted is not one of someone who died in the World Trade Center but Sergeant Byron Norwood. Sergeant Norwood’s tale of sacrifice is a highlight of Captain Payne’s speech. First, when he leaves his family to protect his nation and then when he protects his fellow Marines and is fatally wounded in the process. Towards the end of the ceremony, Mayor Coleman asks those who have served and those who have family serving to stand and receive applause. The sacrifice of the community is commemorated. Captain Payne’s speech is all about sacrifice, not of those who died in the World Trade Center, but of the soldiers who have “answered the call of duty” after 9/11. These men are the heroes of Payne’s portrait of the world, but their sacrifice means little without the national authority.

Captain Payne continues the discourse of national defense, but it is a defense of an ideology as well. The quote earlier from Captain Payne is not complete: the nation's citizens sacrifice for something greater than themselves "to ensure that we may continue to enjoy our way of life, the way we chose to live it." He returns to Bush's more idealistic framing of the War on Terror because it allows for the soldiers' sacrifice and duty to be nobler, more heroic. Within the presidential rhetoric of 9/11 the soldiers have not been neglected, their sacrifice is often mentioned in conjunction with 9/11 remembrance.

In presidential address, a certain image of the American people as resilient and strong allows the presidents to discourage participation of the people in the deliberative moments. The people in most of the 9/11 anniversary speeches given by Bush and Obama are unwavering and unquestioning.<sup>46</sup> In Pflugerville, this is not the case. Though little is done to speak for the American people, the patriotic participation in the ceremony, waving flags and singing anthems, is one way of enacting the role of the American people. If this passive participation was left unchallenged, then the members of the local community would be buying into the supporting role presidential rhetoric has assigned them. However, the Pflugerville community's preoccupation with an ideal of national unity shows more than just a quelling of dissent within the community; it also reveals a nostalgic longing for the perceived past that followed 9/11.

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<sup>46</sup> In the 2011 speech at the Kennedy Center, Obama does discuss public deliberation. "Debates--- about war and peace, about security and civil liberties---have often been fierce these last 10 years. But it is precisely the rigor of these debates, and our ability to resolve them in a way that honors our values and our democracy, that is the measure of our strength."

This longing for a past that may have never existed is in no way an appeal for a return to the actual actions of that time period. The heavy tropes of sacrifice and the listing of the cost of war is a way of encouraging the myth of the American soldier. The mother of a fallen soldier reads a letter from George W. Bush not because they are encouraging unquestioning participation in a war, but because they are questioning participation in the war. They commemorate because they are questioning the current status of the war. The nostalgic appeal of the days after 9/11 is not just for the feelings of a shared purpose but also for the emotional certainty that has slipped. They commemorate because they are questioning.

## **Conclusion**

The official voices of 9/11 are those who have the most power to control how 9/11 is remembered at Ground Zero or in presidential speeches. They have great influence on what pieces of the tragedy are preserved in the public consciousness and circulated years later. With the proliferation and prevalence of these versions of 9/11, it would be nearly impossible for any American not to have been exposed to this official discourse. At Ground Zero, the creators tried to create a ceremony free from controversy that simply focuses on respecting the victims, but Vivian argues that the result is a ceremony that restricts one of the vital functions of communal memories, “the citizenry’s collective capacity to derive resources for speech and action from the terms of civic memory.”<sup>47</sup> George W. Bush use the occasion of 9/11 anniversaries to reinforce support for the War on Terror. Rather than encouraging any active participation in

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<sup>47</sup> Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Forms and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002." 18.

deliberative activities, the epideictic speeches constitute the American people as resilient and committed. In the latter half of the decade, detailed run-downs of the progress of the war disappear, but the celebration of the progress America has made and will continue to fight for remains through the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and from a Democratic president.

The official voices of 9/11 memory seek to maintain the existing structures and reinforce unity, but the position of the creators of the Pflugerville ceremony in an official/vernacular divide is more ambiguous. The similarities between the two memorials are less interesting than the differences, which show how the same event can be commemorated so differently due to different rhetorical situations. While both found inventional resources in patriotic symbols and appeals to *chromos* or *kairos*, the Pflugerville ceremony used the more recent discourses that justify America's actions in the past ten years. This understanding of America's role echoes the presidential speeches and allows the Pflugerville community a way to understand their roles as Americans. Their messages of unity and support for the soldiers rely on the authority and existence of the national institutions but by depending so much on the archive, they reinforce those particular statements.

Bodnar's separation between official and vernacular cultures is much harder to delineate with an event like 9/11 that was experienced by so many but not by all in the same way. Pflugerville seems to be drawing from *topoi* both used and encouraged by official sources, but they are simply using the resources available to create a ceremony for the community. This is not to say that the organizers are not in their own way a part of Bodnar's official culture. As the gatekeepers, the ones with the power to make the

choices, the visible participants provide what they think the community needs. The mayor focuses on the small town community aspect. Jean Garlick expresses her desire for patriotic unity. The military man discusses sacrifice and duty. They use official discourse and they hold official positions. Yet, the underlying message of the ceremony serves the community's needs. The concept of a discursive archive, with the systems of power that maintain the possibilities of 9/11 memory, complicates Bodnar's official/vernacular culture divide because it better explains how some individuals have more power to influence the memories of a particular event, but that the power of that influence does not mean they can control every emergence. Rather than two separate cultures with dueling memories, the archive better allows for a merging of multifaceted memories that each curator can strategically assemble for their own purposes.

In addition to illustrating how individual curators can use the archive to rhetorically construct new messages that serve their own purposes, this chapter also illuminates some of the common themes that emerge in this project concerning the commemoration of 9/11. The first is how certain individual voices are privileged due to their connection to a group or institution. In Pflugerville, the voices that are prominent are those of the community officials and speakers tied to religious or military institutions. Janet Norwood, the "gold star mother" chosen to read the letter from Bush does not directly belong to these groups. When Captain Payne tells her son's story, he becomes the representative of the soldier who died. In this ceremony, Janet Norwood's position as a mother of the soldier becomes a prominent position. To contrast, other voices, like those of the audience are not integrated directly into the ceremony. Stories of



individuals within the community are not the focus of the ceremony. Within the ceremony a clear narrative is presented to and for the community. Community members are invited to participate, in very controlled ways such as singing the national anthem or bowing heads in prayer. This participation, in a way, creates a collective voice. The sound of hundreds of fellow community members signing “God Bless America” can have rhetorical force, but the individual in this situation has limited agency and power only when participating in collective remembering.

This clear narrative facilitates the second theme that flows through all three case studies: unity. As discussed, the organizers of the Pflugerville ceremony urge for unity both nationally and within in their community. These pleas, along with the controlled performance aspects of the ceremony, allow little room for dissent. This is an expected feature of epideictic rhetoric, bringing the community together. However, by constituting the audience as unified, the Pflugerville ceremony collapses those who might a different understanding of 9/11 into the collective.

The third theme relates to those understandings of 9/11. On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as it is very clear within this ceremony, commemorations of the tragedy expand beyond the events at the disaster sites to encompass the events of the ten years since 9/11. One prominent feature of the past 10 years is America’s military endeavors. Here, the link between 9/11 and the War on Terror is both assumed and strengthened. However, as I argue the way in which they talk about the war is not in support of the government’s decisions. They support the soldier, but question the war.

### CHAPTER III

#### “NOT ENOUGH TO SIMPLY REMEMBER AND GRIEVE.” NEWS VALUES AND JOURNALISTIC COMMEMORATION

As a significant anniversary of an important event approaches, imagine the curator of a museum exhibit sifting through archived materials related to the event, searching for the right pieces that will resonate with audience and construct a coherent narrative. Perhaps they are guided in their selection by a rigorous education in the field or years of experience in the profession, these are reasonable assumptions. After all, caring for the materials of our past and presenting them to new audiences is part of their job descriptions. However, what happens when the past is not in the hands of professionals? Curators of museum exhibits have the authority to tell a story of particular moment of time. The product that curation can seem natural- it can seem like the only story. This naturalized authority is a form of official memory. However, authority over memory extends beyond museum professions or the governmental officials that John Bodnar designates the official culture.

When journalists and editors reach into the discursive archive of past events what rules govern the presentation of the past in newspapers? A museum curator derives their authority from their extensive training and knowledge. “It’s clear,” argues Tony Bennett, “that the question of how things get displayed in museums cannot be divorced from questions concerning the training of curators of the structures of museum control and

management – very material constraints which considerably limit the room for manoeuvre of radical museum workers.”<sup>48</sup>

Expanding conceptions of official memory by considering journalists as curators of a discursive archive, where they select and present particular discourses of 9/11 memory, should also examine how curators are constrained by their contexts, including their professional training. In this chapter, I examine how journalistic training through news values as one way to understand the rules that govern the journalist’s selection of past events and examine how journalists use the memory of 9/11. Aspects of news values can be identified in commemorative 9/11 coverage. The ways in which these news values manifest in 9/11 coverage reveals journalists as rhetors of official memory and as curators of a discursive archive. What forms of 9/11 memory are worthy of filling the valuable space of the printed papers? To try and answer this question, I turn to the larger question that journalists and scholars have been asking themselves since journalism’s inception, “What is news?” Journalism turns to news values as a way to determine the news worthiness of an event. This chapter seeks to find those values in the commemoration of 9/11. After an explanation of news values and how they fit into the professional processes of journalists, I address each value in turn in my analysis.

### **Journalism and Commemoration**

While identifying the ways that journalists interact with the past, Jill A. Edy begins with commemoration. She says that the impetus for anniversary journalism seems to derive from a “social inertia” that begins with commemoration ceremonies that serve

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<sup>48</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum : History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995). 127.

as “news pegs.”<sup>49</sup> It is clear that social pressure does play a part in the newspaper companies’ choice to commemorate 9/11 on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In Edy’s case study of mediate memory of the 1965 Los Angeles Watts Riots, she found that “commemorative journalism typically does not attempt to connect the past to the present in meaningful ways.” Continuing, she explains, “Although stories may contain some references to the present, most notably what has changed since the commemorated event occurred, the connection to present issues and concerns is generally weak.”<sup>50</sup> Using a more expansive selection of texts and a very recent time period, I argue that for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, this simply is not true. In fact, the present acted as more than just a “news peg” in this case, displaying how newspapers can enact a unique role in the commemoration of national events.

Although as Edy suggests, newspaper commemoration is not unexpected, the question of interest here is how newspaper editors and journalists make decisions about how to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.

### **Journalism and News Values**

Scholars trying to answer the question of how journalists chose what events qualify as news have developed the concept of news values.<sup>51</sup> Although editors and journalists were making choices of what to include in the daily news long before Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge’s germinal study, these men are widely credited with developing

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<sup>49</sup> Jill A. Edy, "Journalistic Uses of Collective Memory," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 2. 74.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 76.

<sup>51</sup> For a succinct and critical overview of literature on news values see “News Values and Selectivity” by Deirdre O’Neil and Tony Harcup in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (2009)

the first methods to make that decision-making process more transparent.<sup>52</sup> In 1965, Galtung and Ruge introduced ten values which they saw in their analysis of three daily Norwegian newspapers. Relevance, Timeliness, Simplification, Predictability, Unexpectedness, Continuity, Composition, Elite Peoples, Elite Nations, and Negativity are items included on that original list. By making journalistic practices transparent that before lay submerged in the hustle and bustle of the newsroom, Galtung and Ruge presented scholars of journalism with a way to study the choices that editors make in a split second and a clear way for educators to teach future editors and journalists how to make those decisions.

Discussions of news values in the decades since 1965 always seem to begin with Galtung and Ruge but never end there. Criticisms have developed a more succinct list of values. News values have had influence on journalistic training for over forty years. The values the textbooks discuss are not Galtung and Ruge's but show many similarities with them. For the sake of this study, I have selected one text to have the final word. In his textbook *News Reporting and Writing*, Melvin Mencher defines news values as "factors" that "determine the newsworthiness of events, personalities and ideas."<sup>53</sup> Mencher lists seven news values: Timeliness, Impact, Currency, Conflict, Unusual, Prominence, and Proximity. I have selected this text because his textbook is frequently used. The publisher's website for the 11<sup>th</sup> edition claims that "More than a quarter of a million students have learned the craft and ethics of journalism" from "this classic text."<sup>54</sup> Also,

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<sup>52</sup> See Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*. Brighton and Foy, *News Values*

<sup>53</sup> Melvin Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing* (Dubuque, Iowa: W. C. Brown Co., 1977). 58.

<sup>54</sup> McGraw-Hill, "Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing, 11/E Information Center," [http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073511935/information\\_center\\_view0/](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073511935/information_center_view0/).

the simplicity of the seven values allow for a broader range of interpretation. News values are simply qualities that journalists and editors use, sometime unintentionally, to provide a framework for the interpretive work of deciding what qualifies as news. Using these values to discuss 9/11 commemoration provides a glimpse of how training can determine what aspects of memory are brought to the forefront in journalism.

### **The Archive and Intentionality**

News values influence not only the selection process, but also the writing process because they help to determine what parts of a story are drawn out and how the story is framed. Reviewing the applicability of news values to modern newspapers, Tony Harcup and Deirdre O’Neil suggest that studies of news values may tell scholars more about how stories are covered than how they are chosen in the first place.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, this brings up one of the main criticisms of news values: they do not reflect the actual processes of the modern newsroom. Yet, the solution Harcup and O’Neil provide is not to do away with news values but to leave them as an open question. Reinforcing the argument for the usefulness of news values, they touch on the point of news values studies. The point is not that news values exist but that news values exist because they are culturally resonant and are also heavily influenced by industry demands. The reason that news values are useful for this study is that this is one way that scholars of journalism have found to explain how stories are chosen and written in ways that resonate with their particular audiences. I argue that news values are profoundly rhetorical processes as they shape messages in particular ways and when combined with commemorative discourse,

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<sup>55</sup> Harcup, Tony and Deidre O’Neil. “What is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited.” *Journalism Studies* 2:2, 261-280.

news values give us a way to understand how media institutions influence or respond to how memory resonates with the public.

As one way to understand how newspapers select and write stories, news values can help us to understand the unconscious rules that govern the production of commemorative newspaper material. Most empirical studies of news values in journalism rely on these news values being discoverable within the text of the newspaper material. This case study is in part a rhetorical criticism project that makes the same assumptions. An understanding of news values has influenced both scholarly and pedagogical understandings of what is news. Also, as they were to some extent discoverable within the texts before the term news values ever appeared, a textual approach is appropriate. This study, like the news values studies I have drawn upon, does not seek to speak for journalists or editors. These professionals absolutely have agency in making choices about the selection and crafting of commemorative news stories. However, Foucault's discursive approach is not about describing that agency but discovering the rules that constrain and limit that agency. Thus, this study begins by asking whether news values can be found in commemorative coverage of 9/11, and it also goes beyond the argument of their existence to discuss what it means if these values are the rules governing commemorations of 9/11 in national newspapers.

## Newspapers and Commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In this chapter, I have chosen to focus on journalists' role in memory because they are influential players in cultural meaning-making, yet the ways in which they engage that role have not been fully examined. Journalists have the power to be actors in official remembering. As Jill Edy argues, "the documentary style of journalist's work gives them a unique authority in telling the story of the past."<sup>56</sup> I have focused on the text of newspaper articles, without the visuals, in order to simplify the analysis of this unique authority without the complication of the visual or the nuances of television news.

This case study looks at four newspapers with large circulation numbers: *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. I chose *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* because they cover major metropolitan areas where events related to 9/11 occurred. In order to balance those perspectives, I chose *The Los Angeles Times* because it covers a major metropolitan area away from the sites of the tragedy and *USA Today* because it is a national newspaper. References to 9/11 began over a month before the anniversary but, for the most part, increased dramatically in frequency during the week immediately before September 11, 2011. For example, *The New York Times* had 96 articles referencing 9/11 in the week before the anniversary, as opposed to 46 the week before that which was not included in this study.<sup>57</sup> After the anniversary, articles tapered off dramatically, but the stories from the

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<sup>56</sup> Edy, "Journalistic Uses of Collective Memory."

<sup>57</sup> According to searches on the *Lexis-Nexus* Database. Note that this is not necessarily the case for all the papers though. *The Los Angeles Times* does not mention 9/11 outside of that two week time



days after are important to discuss because they are the ones that discuss commemoration of the weekend. *The New York Times* had 19 the week after the anniversary and 14 the week after that. Thus, the articles selected here are those within that two week frame surrounding the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary that mention 9/11. I looked at 253 articles total: 62 from *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 from *USA Today*, 115 from *The New York Times*, and 46 from *The Washington Post*.

As mentioned above, it is important to look at all the ways newspapers discuss 9/11 so little was excluded from my analysis. There is one exception. Letters to the editor were not included in my analysis because they did not originate from an official rhetor, and they reference articles that fall outside of the temporal scope of my project. The articles included fall under the sections of Style, Sports, Lifestyle, Arts, Weekend, Main News, and more. *The New York Times* also ran a special section on September 11, 2011 titled “The 9/11 Decade.”

Editorials, though not hard news, are included as well. Although these are two fairly distinct types of texts, I argue that, within commemorative coverage, the hard lines between the two groups collapse. In their book on mourning in the media, Carolyn Kitch and Janice Hume argue that “In newspapers and newsmagazines and on television, themes of death and memorial are woven together in hard news and features.”<sup>58</sup> Within memorial coverage the distinctions between news stories and human interest stories are indistinct. I would push this argument further to say that the differences in opinion

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frame. *The Washington Post* published 37 before those two weeks and 15 after. *USA Today* published 48 before the two week frame and 3 after.

<sup>58</sup> Kitch and Hume xiv.

pieces are minor when all the coverage is centered on memorializing a particular event. Editorials can be approached with a news values framework because news values are part of the professional identity of journalists.

Analysis of all of the ways in which the newspapers commemorate reveals that several of these news values become apparent. I argue that Impact, Prominence, and Proximity are more apparent than the Unusual, Timeliness, Currency, and Conflict. Their prominence is not due to the number of articles which feature them but to their versatility. While the other four values play complicated or unclear roles in the commemoration of an event that happened ten years ago, Impact, Prominence, and Proximity are used in several ways to commemorate 9/11. I address the three most salient news values and their versatility before brief discussions of the other values and a discussion of how the journalistic lens of news values helps illuminate the official roles journalists perform in 9/11 commemoration.

### **News Values in the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

#### *Impact*

Mencher describes impact as “events that are likely to affect many people.”<sup>59</sup> The large numbers of people affected is why mass catastrophes and natural disasters in any part of the world often get coverage. As 9/11 is considered a national tragedy, it would follow that it would have national impact and affect a large number of Americans. Yet so much has happened in the 10 years since 9/11 and for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, editors and journalists must go beyond the initial impact factor of the atrocities of 9/11. In the

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<sup>59</sup> Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing*. 58.

following section, I discuss two different ways that impact as a value influences these articles through discourses concerning issues of everyday American lives and through narratives that shift the idea of impact from number to degree.

Two prominent examples of how newspapers reiterate that 9/11 still has an impact on everyday lives are through articles concerning national safety and the War on Terror. These two groups of articles connect 9/11 to ongoing issues of safety, security, and national affairs demonstrating that a large number of people have been affected by the aftermath of 9/11.

On September 8, 2011, *USA Today* discusses the many changes in airport security due to the threat of terrorism.<sup>60</sup> Though focused on the actions of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the article quotes an acknowledgment from TSA director John Pistole of the “airport ‘hassle factor’” and an affirmation that steps are being taken to reduce it. Using USA/Gallup poll numbers, the article also argues that the hassle is not such a big deal. 71% of poll participants said that body scanners and pat-downs were “worth it.” “[Passengers] often show more sense than the lawmakers who make policy and oversee security.”<sup>61</sup> While airport security measures do not affect everyone, this article frames them as important anti-terrorism measures. In this way, airports display physical manifestations of 9/11’s aftermath that every passenger experiences. *USA Today* also invoked conversations of security by requesting their readers write in with responses to the question, “Ten years after Sept. 11, do you feel the

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<sup>60</sup>“Security Changes since 9/11 Make the Skies Less Friendly,” *USA Today*, 8 Sept 2011 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

U.S. is safer?"<sup>62</sup> By soliciting reader's opinions on a question of security, this section serves to balance the expert opinions of the TSA article found on the same page. In one, experts are quoted saying we are safer and in the other, safety is more than then the effectiveness of airport security. When readers of *USA Today* are asked this question, the issue of security is framed as an emotional issue, transcending the airport security lines and widening the number of people who are impacted by 9/11-related security issues.

In *The New York Times*, individuals not associated with journalism are also questioned about their opinions on national security. Peter Applebome and Marjorie Connelly summarize poll data about impressions of safety as a nation and within New York City.<sup>63</sup> They introduce the article with this line, "Ten years after Sept. 11, Americans are still walking an emotional tightrope, with increased comfort in the government's antiterrorism efforts but a significant number wary that such a catastrophe could happen again." The collective "Americans" introduces a claim that Americans as a whole were emotionally impacted by 9/11. This claim is supported by a majority of poll participants (83%) responding that they did believe the United States would be the target of a future terrorist attack. The authors use comparisons of similar polls taken five years earlier to demonstrate that the number of participants that believe such an attack is imminent has been reduced. "According to the polls, 38 percent of New York City residents think another terrorist attack is likely in the United States in the next few months, down from 57 percent in a Times/CBS News poll five years ago."<sup>64</sup> They also

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<sup>62</sup> "Ten Years after Sept. 11, Do You Feel the U.S. Is Safer?," *USA Today*, 9 Sept. 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Applebome and Marjorie Connelly, "Feeling Safer, but Still Wary," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

use quotes to give the numbers some context. ““Given the nature of the world we live in and the way some countries view us, I do think another attack on the United States is inevitable at some point in the future,' said Walt Sledzieski, 56, a marketing consultant from Boise, Idaho. 'But I still believe we're doing all the right things, within the limits of our freedoms and the way we want to act as a people, to protect ourselves.’”<sup>65</sup> This article uses poll data present the New York poll participants as a microcosm of the nation and a way to illustrate that everyday Americans have been impacted by 9/11 through lingering fears for national security.

*The New York Times* had several notes about this issue in editorials not explicitly about security. Columnist and New York City resident Joe Nocera mentions increased security on his commute to work. “On Monday, I took the Acela to Washington. The security was clearly beefed up, with police and police dogs patrolling the train. As we left Penn Station, the conductor came on the intercom. ‘Please have your ID ready.’ he said. ‘We will be checking them.’”<sup>66</sup> This is one example of how everyday life has been changed by 9/11. N.R. Kleinfield writes an encompassing retrospective of the past 10 years, at one point noting the changes since 9/11 and asking “what has stuck?” His answers highlight ways in which every day American lives have changed:

Shedding shoes and getting patted down at the airport. Navigating barriers to enter big buildings -- smile for the camera. Every so often, the police rummaging through selected bags at the subway station. All this information being collected on who we are and what we do, snooping that is more accepted than objected to. A nagging suspicion of Muslims. A pair of distant wars that refuse easy endings, with a price tag of \$1.3 trillion and climbing. The certainty that any full reckoning must include

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Joe Nocera, "On 9/11, the View from the Train," *The New York Times*, 13 September 2011.

the cost of shortchanging the country's future. An underlying sense of the sinister out there somewhere. See something, say something.<sup>67</sup>

These examples illustrate how issues of national security were framed as issues that impacted the daily lives of everyday Americans.

The War on Terror was a prominent news event of the past decade, and its impact is communicated through stories and statistics, some of which reinforce the narrative that everyone was affected and others that target specific groups. *The Washington Post* ran two editorials on Friday, September 9, with differing perspectives on the War on Terror. Eugene Robinson questions “Why are we still at War?” listing economic costs along with over 6,000 military deaths and “tens of thousands injuries.”<sup>68</sup> He tries to belay the connection between 9/11 and the current military actions, saying “The war our enemies began on Sept. 11, 2001, is long over.”<sup>69</sup> In these statistics, the soldiers are represented as a group disproportionately affected by the aftermath connected wrongfully to 9/11. Adding the total number of deaths as a figure in an equation to judge the justification of a war does not direct attention to how 9/11 has impacted the soldiers but how the soldier’s deaths have impacted the American people. They are the costs of war.

On the same page, Charles Krauthammer defends the war, discussing the nation’s general “malaise” as the cause for dissatisfaction with the war and not a symptom that

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<sup>67</sup> N. R. Kleinfield, "Getting Here from There," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011. Emphasis mine.

<sup>68</sup> Eugene Robinson, "Why Are We Still at War?," *The Washington Post*, 9 September 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

the costs have not been worth the measures taken.<sup>70</sup> He begins, “The new conventional wisdom on 9/11: We have created a decade of fear. We overreacted to 9/11 - al-Qaeda turned out to be a paper tiger; there never was a second attack - thereby bankrupting the country, destroying our morale and sending us into national decline.”<sup>71</sup> He counters this “new conventional wisdom” with arguments from several angles, concluding “In the end: 10 years, no second attack (which everyone assumed would come within months).”<sup>72</sup> Yet the conventional wisdom says “these exertions have bankrupted the country and led to our current mood of despair and decline.”<sup>73</sup> Krauthammer replies with one word, “rubbish,” followed by figures that contextualize the economics of the War on Terror. While Robinson critiques the current state of the war by discussing its impact as the cost of soldier’s lives, Krauthammer places the economic costs in context, avoiding discussions of how many soldiers have died. Krauthammer does not seek to argue that the war has not had any impact on American lives but that the impact is null or even positive. The absence of a second attack, the safety we gained, is due to “the other great achievement of the decade: the defensive anti-terror apparatus hastily constructed from scratch after 9/11 by President Bush, and then continued by President Obama. Continued why? Because it worked. It kept us safe - the warrantless wiretaps, the Patriot Act, extraordinary rendition, preventive detention and, yes, Guantanamo.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Krauthammer, "The 9/11 'Overreaction'? Nonsense.," *The Washington Post*, 9 September 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Both Krauthammer and Robinson approach the War on Terror as a national issue, one that was carried about the nation's government and has certain costs for the nation's citizens. Scott Shane's article frames the impact of 9/11 as an emotional reaction that created the current situation. In his review of the history and status of the battle against Al Qaeda, Shane frames anti-terrorism measures as emotionally instigated and something to be controlled.<sup>75</sup> "The attacks inflicted on the American psyche a kind of collective post-traumatic stress disorder, producing at a societal level the hypervigilance that soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan know too well."<sup>76</sup> Shane frames the beginnings of the war as emerging from 9/11's impact and, perhaps, is subtly nodding at the war's effects on the soldiers. However, this slight mention of the soldiers is the only one in the article. Like Robinson and Krauthammer, Shane continues to reiterate the discourse of the War on Terror as a national issue with national impact.

However, this is not always the case when the War on Terror is brought up. The second way that the news value impact manifests in this coverage is through discussions of who was impacted more. This shifts the conception of impact from how *many* were affected to how *much* people were affected. As I argue below, this constitutes a collapse of what may be termed a human interest story into the news value of impact. The images of military personnel and families are a fitting example of how impact can be shifted from quantity to quality.

In *The Washington Post*, Petula Dvorac uses interviews with children whose parents serve in the military in order to construct a narrative of how these children were

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<sup>75</sup> Scott Shane, "Al Qaeda's Outsize Shadow," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



affected by 9/11. She begins with the story of Jaelen Gadson, a military kid whose father died in service. "He's part of a generation of military kids for whom wartime isn't the new normal. It's just normal. It's what they've grown up with. And the sacrifices they've had to make since Sept. 11 are just as sobering as those of their parents."<sup>77</sup> This article discusses the impact of 9/11 in terms of the "sacrifices" made by military families.

Michelle Obama, writing in *USA Today*, called the servicemen "the 9/11 generation." She also draws attention to the sacrifices of the military and their families. "They've rightfully earned not only the admiration of a grateful nation, but also a place in history alongside our greatest generations."<sup>78</sup> These stories may be labeled as "human interest" or "soft" news, with more emotional or entertainment value than anything else. Many lists of news values include human interest as a separate value, but I argue that these stories are not soft news but a deliberate reframing of how we measure the "impact" of a news event.

As commemorative pieces, these articles are examples of epideictic rhetoric. The reification of "everyone was affected" discourses serves to shape a community and bind readers together as Americans. The pathos appeals of the human interest stories are not uncommon in epideictic rhetoric, but this singling out of individuals (military personnel) without any direct constitution of a community allows the newspapers to intervene in the traditional discourse of impact by redefining not only what the event is (the War on Terror), but also by pointing out that some of the collective are impacted by that event

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<sup>77</sup> Petula Dvorak, "Today's Military Youths Shoulder the Horror of 9/11," *The Washington Post*, 9 September 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Michelle Obama, "Support Military Families Who Have Served Us since 9/11," *USA Today*, 15 September 2011.

disproportionately. In this section, I have revealed how the text of these 9/11 anniversary articles highlights impact by reiterating the image of a national community affected by tragedy and its aftermath. I argue that this can be seen in two different aspects: discourses of how 9/11 has affected everyday American's lives and narratives that shift impact from number to degree. With these two strategies, journalists as curators of a discursive archive use the commemorative occasion to shape the community and define what the past 10 years meant. When impact is a salient value in commemorative coverage, the story of 9/11 the curator creates both reifies discourse that 9/11 affected everyone and points out groups that were impacted more or in different ways.

### *Prominence*

Prominence is the more recent version of what Gatlung and Ruge in their germinal study of news values called elite peoples and nations in order to describe how some countries and individuals were featured and others were not. Mencher describes prominence as "events involving well-known people or institutions."<sup>79</sup> This news value is ascribed to articles about presidents and CEOs, nations with powerful influence on world events, and major corporations. The clearest example of this value in the coverage surrounding the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary is the focus on the ceremonies in New York and, to a lesser degree, Washington D.C. and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. However, I argue that within this commemorative coverage the places and people associated within the tragedies are also afforded prominent status that sets them apart from other Americans.

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<sup>79</sup> Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing*. 59.

We could attribute the prominence of the official memorial services to the fact that presidents, current and former, as well as first ladies and vice presidents participated by attending and giving speeches. These high-profile public people are also featured in other ways. President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama each wrote letters that were published in *USA Today*.<sup>80</sup> Former President George W. Bush is interviewed in an extensive article looking back to this moment in his presidency and the years since.<sup>81</sup> Quotes from President Obama pop up during reports of political issues. *The New York Times* has an entire article discussing the rhetorical situation and plan for Obama's 9/11 anniversary speech.<sup>82</sup> The name recognition of these participants does not fully elucidate the prominence of the ceremonies, but it does explain why their role in the ceremonies is accentuated.

Describing the prominence news value, Mencher says "names make news, goes the old adage, even when the event is of little consequence."<sup>83</sup> I argue that, within the context of 9/11, places also make news. Locations, like events, can also be overlooked as newsworthy, and other news values dictate whether that story gets told. When natural disasters happen around the world, the story is not always told in American newspapers unless prominent people are involved, a great number of people were impacted, it fits into an ongoing story, is extremely bizarre, etc. The attacks on September 11, however, are a different situation.

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<sup>80</sup> Obama, "Remarks by the President at Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial." and Obama, "Support Military Families Who Have Served Us since 9/11."

<sup>81</sup> Judy Keen, "Bush Says Actions after 9/11 Prevented Another Attack," *USA Today*, 9 September 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Christi Parsons and Kathleen Hennessey, "9/11, Ten Years after/ a President's Message," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 2011.

<sup>83</sup> Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing*.

In the public memory of September 11, the locations have a prominent news value because of the importance of place in commemoration. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott call sites like ground zero “memory places” where “the signifier assumes special importance.”<sup>84</sup> Where the place is abstracted, a point of reference in a newspaper article, it still maintains its importance as a memory place because of the signifier. For example, as a place, Ground Zero has collective meaning, and the name itself signifies all that Ground Zero means. The places of 9/11 derive their importance not only from the fact that they are the loci of tragedy, the places where people died, but also because the signifier of a memory place “announces itself as a marker of collective identity.”<sup>85</sup> In the same way that 9/11 was seen from the beginning as a national tragedy, that field in Shanksville, the Pentagon, and remains of the World Trade Center have entered the public consciousness as memory places.

It is no surprise then that the places are the focus of the newspaper ceremony coverage. The prominence of these locations is what allows New York columnists like Norcera to discuss their impressions of the city. “On Sunday, New York was a somber city – ‘solemn’ an out-of-town friend said that night over dinner. People went about their business, but we could all hear the helicopters and see the armed police, just like in the days after 9/11.”<sup>86</sup>

Shanksville is rarely mentioned outside of the memorial and the Pentagon gets even less space in the papers. In *The Washington Post*, Shanksville is only mentioned as

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<sup>84</sup> Taylor, “Radioactive History: Rhetoric, Memory, and Place in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Museum.” 25. Memory places are not always sites of tragedy, but include museums, memorials, and historical preservations.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>86</sup> Nocera, “On 9/11, the View from the Train.”

part of Obama's anniversary itinerary or a list. For example, an article on media coverage states "Eight networks carried live coverage of the official memorial ceremonies at the Pentagon, Ground Zero and Shanksville, Pa."<sup>87</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* was the only paper to run a story specifically focused on the events in Pennsylvania. Kathleen Hennessey begins, "If the three attacks of Sept. 11 have each taken on symbolism in the last decade, Flight 93 has come to be thought of as Middle America's tragedy -- at least by those closest to it. Its site is pastoral and quiet, miles from hubs of power. Its story prompts a simple question: What would I have done?"<sup>88</sup> However, whenever these memory places are mentioned, it is not without stories of people still the focus of the article.

The evocative power of a memory place is what makes witnesses and survivors stories so prominent; they were there when tragedy struck. Stories of First Responders, Families, Survivors, and Witnesses appeared because of their experience with these locations, with the tragedies themselves. They are not elite peoples, not many recognize their names, but as a collective, the individual becomes prominent through the role that they play. *The New York Times* returned to its "Portraits of Grief" participants to see how the families of 9/11 victims feel ten years later. These stories are not about what happened on 9/11 but what has happened in the 10 years since. In the story of William Lang, who lost his son Brendan on 9/11, Glenn Collins shows families moving on. "Getting through every year is ultimately about letting go of the past. Brendan's widow,

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Farhi, "On Sept. 11, Media Won't Let Us Forget," *The Washington Post*, 12 September 2011.

<sup>88</sup> Kathleen Hennessey, "9/11, Ten Years Later / Consecrated Ground," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 2011.

Sandy, has since remarried and has started a family, and Mr. Lang hears from her every now and then, he said.”<sup>89</sup> Gina Cayne, who lost her husband, has started a foundation to help residents in her town. “The foundation helped anyone with children under 18 who lost a spouse suddenly -- a situation that simulated her own -- by giving emotional support and paying three months' rent or mortgage, up to \$9,000.”<sup>90</sup>

*The Washington Post* also had two articles about family members. The story of Floyd Rasmussen, a sick man who flew across the country to visit the Pentagon which featured a place for his first wife killed upon Flight 77's impact, ends with his death upon returning home from that visit. “Floyd's wife of 27 years, Rhonda Sue Rasmussen, an Army budget analyst, died when American Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon close to her first-floor cubicle. Floyd, working two floors away, evacuated the building unharmed.”<sup>91</sup> Roxanne Roberts and Amy Argetsinger write the story of Ted Olson, the husband of Barbara Wilson who was on Flight 77. They give highlights from his life these past 10 years. “The past decade has been filled with personal and professional highs: Since 2006, Olson has been happily married to Booth, his fourth wife.”<sup>92</sup>

Of course, family members and survivors are not the only ones with their stories told. Witnesses have a place as well. *USA Today* tells the story of a Ground Zero Chaplain, Andrea Raynor.<sup>93</sup> “Since serving as a chaplain at Ground Zero after 9/11,

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<sup>89</sup> Glenn Collins et al., "Living with Loss," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Joel Achenbach, "For a 9/11 Widower, One Final Journey " *The Washington Post*, 16 September 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Roxanne Roberts and Amy Argetsinger, "For Ted Olsen, a 9/11 Commemoration Best Spent with Family, Far from D.C.," *The Washington Post*, 12 September 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Janice Lloyd, “Ground Zero chaplain finds her own blessings; ‘Courage, hope, dignity’ rose from the wreckage,” *USA Today*, September 8, 2011

Andrea Raynor has had her share of health problems. She suffered a miscarriage and was diagnosed with breast cancer, and she sometimes wonders whether recovery site toxins might have been the cause. But she has no regrets.”<sup>94</sup>

Prominence is a highly salient news value in this story because it is not just about the public officials involved but places of tragedy and individuals who fit into the narrative of 9/11. Journalists can discuss the state of New York City or tell the story of a grieving widower because of the importance of places and people associated with tragedy in commemoration. As symbols within epideictic rhetoric, these prominent places and people are characters within the story of 9/11 and as family members or witnesses, part of the way we understand the tragedy. When prominence is a salient value in 9/11 coverage, certain individuals, groups, or places are highlighted, strengthening their positions as the characters and scenes through which the story of 9/11 is remembered.

### *Proximity*

Although certain locations in the public memory of 9/11 are prominent, newspapers have a diverse audience that is often displaced from these locations. As I will argue, the proximity news value, “events geographically or emotionally close to the reader, viewer or listener,” is highly salient because of the nature of the event and epideictic form.<sup>95</sup> Like impact, this value could also take quantitative aspects- the greater the number of people with whom a story is likely to resonate, the more likely the

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<sup>94</sup> Janice Lloyd, "Ground Zero Chaplain Finds Her Own Blessings," *USA Today*, 8 September 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing*.60

story is to be covered. Mencher states “people also feel close to events and individuals with whom they have emotional ties.”<sup>96</sup> Physical proximity refers to events near to readers that may affect them or they may be interested in. I discuss how each aspect of proximity is found in 9/11 anniversary coverage.

Americans responded emotionally to the horrors of 9/11. In the 9/11 commemorative coverage, the tragedies of 9/11 and the decade since are portrayed as American issues that affect all Americans on some level. In the discussion concerning the impact value, I showed that these newspaper articles articulate a narrative that everyone was affected. Here, I argue that the emotional aspects of that narrative manifest through human interest stories.

I argued earlier that human interest stories, which focus on personal emotions or stories of individuals, present a way to redefine who is impacted by the events of 9/11. These stories also invite readers to share or witness the individual emotions of each story. For example, in the Sports section of *The Los Angeles Times*, Evan Cascio’s story is told. Cascio’s older brother was in the World Trade Center on 9/11 and now, Cascio turns to sports for comfort. The journalist writes

For some people who lost loved ones on that day, sports have become an unexpected comfort and a touchstone, helping to keep cherished memories alive... For Cascio, a 30-year-old broker who now lives in Southern California, that means subscribing to satellite TV so he can follow the Giants, the Yankees and Notre Dame football with a passion that he learned from Paul when they were kids. ‘There’s something about sports,’ he says. ‘They make you feel better.’<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 60

<sup>97</sup> David Wharton, "9/11, Ten Years after / Transcending Sports," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 September 2011.



N. R. Kleinfield writes in *The New York Times* about the process of dealing with the grief of 9/11. In this article, he tells the story of Sasha, a young witness to the attacks that is living with Asperger's. "Year after year, Sasha didn't talk about 9/11. Then in March, he wrote a graphic novel to satisfy a school assignment to relate a pivotal moment. It was his 9/11 day, from morning pancakes to music class to calamity and tears."<sup>98</sup> When asked what 9/11 means, Sasha is quoted as saying, "I don't know what to say. It's just sadness. That's all it will ever be. Lots and lots of sadness."<sup>99</sup> Emotional proximity is expressed through the pathos of individual tales.

Physical proximity takes the form of simple announcements, as well as coverage of local people and places. Take *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* as examples of the variety of ways that the local focus is shown in the commemorative coverage. *The New York Times* ran announcements of dozens of events taking place on the anniversary weekend. One article, centered on an interfaith organization started by Christian and Muslim women, focuses in on Syracuse, New York. On the anniversary of the attacks, the group mobilized hundreds of volunteer projects across the city. "The undertaking required hours of meetings, thousands of e-mails and plenty of arguing. In the middle of an interminable debate over the logo design, Joy Pople, the Syracuse group's vice president, had an epiphany. 'I didn't even look around the room and say to myself, you're Muslim and you're Christian,' she said. 'I just forgot.'"<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Kleinfield, "Getting Here from There."

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Laurie Goodstein, "Small Leaps of Faith," *The New York Times*, 11 September, 2011.

Another story discusses the past 10 years in Rockaway, a large Irish community disproportionately impacted by the attacks due to a larger number of first responders coming from that neighborhood. Anne Barnard introduces the area's story like this: "An annual charity event was starting off summer on the Rockaway peninsula, a sliver of Queens jutting into the Atlantic Ocean. In the usual place of honor, between the Budweiser and the barbecue, stood photographs of grinning young men: all childhood friends, all dead."<sup>101</sup>

The *Los Angeles Times* also posts lists of commemorative events happening in the area, coverage of local art remembering 9/11, and so on. Playwright Stephanie Fleschmann is interviewed about her new play where Hans Christina Anderson tales are retold for a post-9/11 world. When asked if 9/11 influenced her as an artist, she answers "In a word, yes. It was a galvanizing moment. If I look back on everything I've written since then, it has some sort of political undertone, no matter how subtle or sideways, even when that wasn't necessarily what I set out to do."<sup>102</sup> The day after the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there are two articles that describe, to some extent, local ceremonies. The mayor and others affected by 9/11 are interviewed for the piece. "Much of the nation's attention Sunday was riveted on New York City and other sites of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist incidents. But nearly 3,000 miles away, many Los Angeles residents held their own heartfelt commemorations. Those the attacks had touched closely included a woman who lost her nephew, a man who was one degree removed from numerous

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<sup>101</sup> Anne Banard, "On a Haunted Shore, a Struggle to Let Go," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Charles McNulty, "Culture Monster; Anderson Tales Retold for a Post-9/11 World," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 2011.

victims, a college student whose cousins went off to war in the aftermath and a man who narrowly escaped when the World Trade Center towers collapsed.”<sup>103</sup> These articles focus on local stories and local emotions.

Proximity is highly salient because it is used to describe both physical and emotionally proximity. Physical proximity explains how newspapers frame content on a national tragedy by focusing on how the local population is involved in the story. Emotional proximity appears in human interest stories that use storytelling to convey emotions and the emotional aspects of the narrative that everyone was affected. As epideictic rhetoric, these newspaper articles constitute a community and allow their audience to share in 9/11 commemoration emotionally or by getting involved in local events. When proximity is a highly salient value in commemorative coverage, the journalistic curators are furthering discourse about how and in what ways Americans were and should be affected by 9/11.

#### *The Unusual, Conflict, Currency, and Timeliness*

I have argued so far that impact, prominence, and proximity are highly salient news values in the newspaper coverage of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 because these values take on multiple variations within anniversary journalism. In this section, I introduce the four other values Mencher lists -The Unusual, Conflict, Currency, and Timeliness- and argue that these values are less salient because of their limited capacities in anniversary journalism. I define and address how each of these four values is used one at a time.

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<sup>103</sup> Howard Blume, "9/11, Ten Years after / the Nation Remembers," *The Los Angeles Times*, 12 September 2011.

Mencher defines The Unusual as “events that deviate sharply from the expected the experiences of everyday life.”<sup>104</sup> One could argue that an anniversary is unusual, that the date of significance fits the definition of an unusual news value. Although the date is significant, the commemoration is not unexpected.

I have discussed how the authors of several pieces use the anniversary to point out how the events following 9/11 continue to affect American lives, discourse, and policies. This is not to say that the unusual does not appear, simply that it is lost in the rest of the coverage. For example, *The Washington Post* writes about Heinz Linderman, a federal employee working at the Pentagon on 9/11 who ended up meeting and marrying his second wife due their connection to the tragedy. The love story leads to marriage at the Pentagon Memorial Chapel.

The couple were married that August in a modest ceremony officiated by a retired military chaplain. Their children were there, and so was Heinz's mother. A couple dozen co-workers filed into the chapel's 91 seats. Tourists peered in along their walk through the building. Amid the joy of the day were reminders of tragedy. One wedding guest had lost dozens of co-workers in the attack. Most of those who came wore military fatigues, and a small American flag decorated the reception room.

The title of the article, “A Life Improved” strikes an odd chord with the stories of loss surrounding it- an untraditional wedding in a chapel attached to a memorial. Yet other news values overshadow the unusual nature of the story. The story is geographically proximate to the base of *The Washington Post* and the Pentagon, a prominent location within the 9/11 coverage, is highlighted. Thus, The Unusual does appear in 9/11 coverage, but it is often accompanied by other news values.

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<sup>104</sup> Mencher, 61

Conflict, according to Mencher, refers to “events that reflect clashes between people and institutions.”<sup>105</sup> Examples of conflict within 9/11 stories are articles focused on religion or war in the 9/11 decade, but the commemorative cloak of the weekend mutes the conflict value. The contentious op-eds where the authors give their opinion of the war are a clear example of how conflict is present. Earlier, I argued that discussions of the war constituted the nation’s military endeavors as a national issue that impacted all Americans. Those same articles display the conflict value as they are arguing about the war, but they are still arguing for less conflict. Robinson says, “The war our enemies began on Sept. 11, 2001, is long over. Perhaps now, after 10 years of anxiety and self-doubt, we can acknowledge our victory and begin the postwar renewal and reconciliation that the nation so desperately needs.”<sup>106</sup> Robinson is not alone in his urge for peace, bipartisanship, and national unity. The journalists here are looking back to bring the community together and give the community a direction in the future, an essential function of epideictic rhetoric.

Articles that feature religious conflict often have similar hopes. *The New York Times* ran an article on the anniversary about “the 9/11 generation” or Muslim-Americans coming of age in the last ten years. The author, Andrea Elliot, makes no explicit calls to overcome conflict but discusses how these young Americans deal with the post-9/11 backlash. By illustrating how these individuals are attempting to overcome misconceptions of their religion, the article more subtly performs a similar role as the other articles about conflict. For example, Musa Syeed is using film to paint a “deeper

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<sup>105</sup> Mencher, *News Reporting and Writing*. 61.

<sup>106</sup> Robinson, “Why Are We Still at War?.”

portrait” of Muslim experiences.<sup>107</sup> Tired of “what he called the ‘Muslims are people too’ narrative that has come to define the way Muslim Americans present themselves in artistic pursuits or to the news media,” Syeed is attempting something different.<sup>108</sup> “It’s about correcting stereotypes and not about engaging the craft in any of these mediums,” said Mr. Syeed, who will soon complete his first feature film, ‘Valley of Saints.’ “I’ve had to put that aside. It’s about telling good stories -- universal, human stories.”<sup>109</sup>

In *USA Today*, Stephen Prothero, a professor of religion at Boston University, ends his overview of the past decade of conflict with a description of the public leaders at the memorial service three days after 9/11. “This image of political and religious leaders standing together is my enduring image of 9/11, and my hope for the days to come.”<sup>110</sup> In these articles, where the conflict value is present, the story has a different and more positive ending. The conflict value is overshadowed by the commemorative occasion.

The currency value refers to “events and situations that are being talked about.”<sup>111</sup> A new event is more likely to be picked up if there is a tie-in to other ongoing events. If we interpret this to broadly mean issues circulating in the public discourse, then the politics, security, and military articles I discussed earlier as prominently featuring impact would display this value as well. Discussion of religion and national

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<sup>107</sup> Andrea Elliott, *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Prothero, Stephen. “How 9/11 changed religion in America” *USA Today*, September 12, 2011. News 11A

<sup>111</sup> Mencher 61

unity, like the ones discussed under the conflict value, would fit under a broad definition of currency too. However, this broad definition is not enough to make currency a highly salient value. Rather than these stories being events journalists chose to cover because of the wider discourse, the anniversary is being used to discuss stories that otherwise lack the event that makes them newsworthy. The anniversary allows the journalists to use a retrospective of the past decade to discuss larger cultural and political issues. If news values are how journalists make decisions about what is newsworthy, then commentary on the current situation would need not only a clear event to focus on but other salient news values to make the cut.

Like currency, timeliness is a difficult news value to discover in anniversary journalism. According to Mencher, timeliness refers to “events that are immediate, recent.”<sup>112</sup> To some extent, the anniversary itself is an event, but it is differentiated from the typical news event because it is expected and, thus, planned for. For the most part, the stories are not coverage of an event happening in the present but retrospectives of the past ten years. The stories of the military families are not stories of what they have gone through in the last ten years.<sup>113</sup> Columnists like *The New York Times*’s Nocera talk about what has changed.<sup>114</sup> N. R. Kleinfield discusses the grieving process post-9/11.<sup>115</sup>

However, the event that is happening now -the anniversary- is timely. Coverage of commemorations are used by journalists to craft a timely event. Cited in *The Washington Post*, Gene Roberts says “if you have a lot of time to fill, anniversaries are

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<sup>112</sup> Mencher 58

<sup>113</sup> Dvorak, "Today's Military Youths Shoulder the Horror of 9/11."

<sup>114</sup> Nocera, "On 9/11, the View from the Train."

<sup>115</sup> Kleinfield, "Getting Here from There."

something [the media] can plan ahead on... I guess I can think of some more important milestones that got coverage, but not like this.”<sup>116</sup> The writer of this article, Paul Farhi is describing the deluge of media commemoration of 9/11. He describes a “fervor” that may fade as time passes, even as 9/11 remains “a high-water mark.”<sup>117</sup> What some authors describe almost as a collective, compulsive need to commemorate is part of what makes anniversary journalism for an event of such scope and magnitude timely. Meghan Daum states in *The Los Angeles Times*, “This being 9/11’s first round-number anniversary, the imperative to pay homage is accompanied by considerably more fanfare than in years past.”<sup>118</sup> By turning the lens back on the commemorative impulse, these journalists have a timely event that is a result of the anniversary and not the anniversary itself. Although whatever timeliness these articles present is overwhelmed by impact, prominence, or proximity, there is something interesting about the way that conceptions of time intersect on this anniversary.

In one way, anniversary is extremely timely. The articles are published around a date that has immense significance in the American culture. However, the only “new” events are commemorative activities, which journalists can use to discuss not just 9/11 but what has happened in the ten years following. Regardless, conceptions of when the story occurred are so confused in these stories that they are not a highly salient value.

I have argued that these four values, The Unusual, Conflict, Currency, and Timeliness, are not highly salient because their interpretations are limited. The event in

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<sup>116</sup> Farhi, Paul. “On Sept. 11, media won’t let us forget.”

<sup>117</sup> Farhi.

<sup>118</sup> Daum, Megan. “The Impulse to pay Tribute”



question, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11, is not unusual or timely. The media event is planned and commemorative. As epideictic rhetoric, the conflict value can be pushed aside in favor of language that urges the community to get along and pick up on ongoing issues to help the community make sense of where they are in relation to past events.

## **Conclusion**

The journalistic lens of news values helps illuminate the unique roll that national newspapers play in commemoration of 9/11. As I have shown, news values are present in the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 coverage but due to the commemorative nature, they appear in expanded or limited capacities. Impact, Proximity, and Prominence are highly salient because they are flexible and can be used in multiple ways to cover a past event. On the other hand, The Unusual, Conflict, Currency, and Timeliness are complicated and limited.

Anniversaries of other events come and go with regularity. What makes this day “timely” is more than just the passage of time. As natural and necessary as remembering 9/11 seems on this date, we must not let the occasion slide without looking more closely at why this anniversary is important enough to demand special sections. 9/11 is an event that many claim should never be forgotten. Why? Why are newspapers, a medium where events may be important one day and not the next, a site of commemoration? When the word crisis is tossed around in conjunction with the newspaper economy, why is valuable space given to an event that is not new news? Although this study is not designed to answer those questions, if any study ever could, I maintain that the archive might provide ways to approach these questions. Circulating discourses of 9/11 are part

of an archive, where curators, such as journalists, can draw on those discourses to craft messages that fit their particular situations. When the curator uses the stories of 9/11, they may be reifying the ways in which the event is remembered, but they also have the capacity to shift our understandings of what 9/11 means.

Looking at rhetorical studies may help us answer some of these questions by looking more closely at epideictic rhetoric. Celeste Condit posits three functions for epideictic speeches, which focus not just on what power the orator retains from these functions but also on the audience's involvement in the speech. In many ways, they perform clear epideictic roles such as bringing the community together and amplifying praise and blame, although unlike traditional funeral orations there is no single individual to focus on. The abundance of varying discourses surrounding 9/11 allow the journalists and editors to select certain pieces of the 9/11 discourse to make it relevant for present times. This contributes to a rhetorical strategy that strays from any pretense of honoring the past, to a judicial reimagining of the past 10 years and a deliberative function where the present challenges, both politically and culturally, also fit into the coverage of the 9/11 story. By framing judicial and deliberative discourse under the cloak of commemoration, newspapers not only retain the epideictic powers to define the event, shape the community, and display their eloquence, but also the ability to push policy and judge the past. This is not hidden or secretive either; rather, it seems to be a natural function of a medium focused on the present. The editors of *The New York Times* make this claim succinctly in their editorial message. "We tried, almost immediately, to

understand how the morning of 9/11 would change our future. A decade later, we're still looking back and looking ahead. It is not enough simply to remember and grieve."<sup>119</sup>

In this case, journalists are constrained by news values when commemorating 9/11. This presents a story of 9/11 with discourses of the event impacting the entire country but some groups, like the military, more so. Prominent individuals are reified in their positions and their authority to tell the story. This applies to presidents as well as victims, witnesses, and family members. Those individuals with ties to the geographically salient locations of the 9/11 tragedy have a place in the story of 9/11 and an authority to insert their story. While framing the commemorative weekend in ways thought to be geographically or emotionally salient to their audience, editors and journalists of these newspapers, reify conceptions of the appropriate places and emotions that should be associated with 9/11. For example, grief and sadness are illustrated through storytelling. These emotions that supposedly resonate with the audience, yet readers who may feel anger or confusion have little to identify with in this memorial coverage. Thus, journalists have authority to draft a story of 9/11, but news values constrain them to one that is focused on who was impacted, who or where is important, and how the audience should relate to 9/11.

The themes that emerge from the Pflugerville ceremony also are in play here, revealing a certain image of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. As I've argued throughout this chapter, some individuals have a larger part to play in the stories of 9/11 than others. People with some connection to the places of 9/11 are solicited for their stories and their opinions of

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<sup>119</sup> "Loss and Hope: As a Nation, We Can Work to Retrieve the Compassion That Surged after 9/11," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2011.

the event. Some of the articles show adherence to a simplified narrative that urges unity. This is not always the case, as editorials attack the war and the conflict over religion is included in this story of 9/11. However, I've argued that this conflict is overshadowed by heavier discourse. Also, this conflict is concerning issues that have followed 9/11, not the date itself. Controversy more closely related to the events of 9/11, such as the counter-narratives those called 9/11 Truthers hold to or discussions of the health of the first responders. This relates to the third theme, how the focus has shifted from the events 10 years ago to the events that have followed. The discussions within these articles, especially in impact, are making 9/11 relevant for today and only eluding to those days. Thus, discussions that connect or disconnect the war from 9/11 are included, but stories about individual memories are not so much about what happened back then, but how we feel about it now

## CHAPTER IV

### REMEMBERING TOGETHER AND BLURRING LINES: COMMEMORATING THROUGH TWITTER

In a suburb of Hamburg, Germany, there lies a monument buried in the ground. Artists Jochen and Esther Gerz designed a “countermonument,” a 12-meter-high metal obelisk which invites visitors to leave their inscription on its surface and then, over the years, it was lowered into the ground in measures so that new space was available. James Young argues that the structure challenges visitors to participate and “in effect, the vanishing monument will have returned the burden of memory to the visitor.”<sup>120</sup> Unlike other monuments, this public artwork does not tell viewers what to think but “undermines its own authority by inviting and then incorporating the authority of the passerby.”<sup>121</sup> Questions of vernacular and official memory are ultimately questions of authority. Who has the authority to tell the story? By creating an official monument, in a public space and paid for by the city, that invites vernacular response, the Gerz’s have confused what usually is presented as a binary. Opening spaces for vernacular expression invites a multiplicity of voices. With the advance of modern technologies, these open spaces are being built in online environments, and the lines between official and vernacular are being blurred further. Another interesting parallel between the Gerz’s structure and commemoration through new media is that it seems temporary and in the

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<sup>120</sup> Young, James E., *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993). 28.

<sup>121</sup> Young. 33.

moment. Compared to solid memorials, social media is transient. Although it can be collected and preserved, it is the moment of participation that gives it meaning.

Social media was used in a variety of ways on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. Facebook and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum were working together to create an app where Facebook users could update profile photos or status's to honor the victims of 9/11. Several news organizations promoted particular Twitter hashtags. The @NBCNews Twitter feed was hacked September 9 and updated with posts describing another attack. The hoax was quickly shut down, but this illustrates both that the memory of 9/11 can be used in many ways and the vulnerability of social media.

In this chapter, I argue that examining tweets from the #onSept11 and #wherewereyou hashtags weighted by “influence” reveals an interaction between individual and official curators of the discursive archive of 9/11 memory as well as potential epideictic and deliberative roles for the vernacular curator. Here, the vernacular curator is conceptualized as the individual posting their personal remembrances and official, the Twitter users or accounts associated with institutions. Many of these tweets do not fit neatly in either of these boxes though. This argument unfolds in several steps. First, I analyze the data to understand how tweeters used the hashtags. Then, I evaluate the meaning of these uses within the context of the influential tweets that I am examining and argue that this slice of the hashtags illustrates a complicated entanglement of vernacular and official rhetoric. I parse out the ways in which Twitter's interactive features facilitate this entanglement and the ways in which memory is circulated. Finally, I argue that the ways in which the technology is used presents

opportunities for Twitter users as curators to interact with other users, essentially working together to shape messages of 9/11 commemoration and participating collectively in the discursive archive.

Blogs, social media, websites; the internet has opened avenues for the news dissemination process, but where does it fit in commemoration? For public memory, this means that the control over what is remembered and reiterated about events has loosened; more vernacular expressions have a forum. Several memory scholars have undertaken the project of looking at digital media. Websites are popular items of study, as in the study of vernacular 9/11 memory by Aaron Hess, but memory scholars have not done extensive research in social media.<sup>122</sup> In part, this is because of its transient nature. A website can remain on the internet, unchanged, for years. You can count how many people have visited the site and see clearly how the designer (or group of designers) rhetorically composed their site. Yet, with social media, it is an entirely different ballgame. The messages or texts associated with social media are often brief, it is difficult to illustrate who it reached, and the messages remain in the public sphere only for a short time. All of these present difficulties for any researcher, especially a rhetorical scholar looking for cohesive texts or a memory scholar looking for semi-permanent expression.

Twitter is one of the largest social media platforms to date with over a hundred million users, but research on this technology is still growing. Few scholars are investigating how social media could provide new forums for remembering together.

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<sup>122</sup> Hess, "In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials."

Media and computer science scholars, however, have done some investigations into the workings of this website. First, I use some of this literature to give an overview of the technology and then, I outline the data and methodology of this chapter.

Twitter is a microblogging service which allows users to create their own content in the form of short post, or tweets, that collect their own page organized chronologically. Tweets have a 140 character limit, meaning that users are constrained to a very brief space to express their thoughts. Although one can set privacy settings, the default Twitter account is public and most users do not change this.<sup>123</sup>

Over the years, Twitter users have found ways to utilize the interactive aspects of Twitter that allow them to connect with other users. In 2010, boyd, Golder and Lotan identified three ways in which conversations can occur on Twitter.<sup>124</sup> The first, is the use of the "@user" symbol which serves as a form of address to the user tagged. Another aspect of Twitter which facilitates conversation is retweeting, where users disseminate tweets other users have created. According to boyd, Golder, and Lotan, "while retweeting can simply be seen as the act of copying and rebroadcasting, the practice contributes to a conversational ecology in which conversations are composed of a public interplay of voices that give rise to an emotional sense of shared conversational context."<sup>125</sup>

The third conversational path identified by boyd, Golder, and Lotan is through the use of hashtags. The syntax of a hashtag is simply a word or phrase preceded by the

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<sup>123</sup> danah boyd, Scott Golder, and Gilad Lotan, "Tweet, Tweet, Retweet: Conversational Aspects of Retweeting on Twitter," in *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Kauai, Hawaii2010).

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



pound sign (#). The search functions of the Twitter website allow users to search for a particular hashtag and discover other tweets using that hashtag. Thus, by labeling their post with a hashtag, individual Tweeters are essentially broadcasting their message to a public audience, however limited that audience may be.

Looking at tweets from September 11, 2011, I selected two popular hashtags, #onSept11 and #wherewereyou. By examining only tweets that include these particular hashtags, I have limited this study to tweets that publically engage an imagined audience by participating in an extremely loose and fluid form of computer-mediated communication. Within the framework of this study, individual users participate in a collective curation of 9/11 memory that serves to both constitute new texts for the discursive archive, as well as reconstitute older discourse of 9/11 and their place in the archive. Although tweeters used several hashtags on this day that refer to the tragedy ten years before, these two were selected because the use of these hashtags demonstrates that users understood the underlying questions in the texts. The questions are where you were on September 11 and what happened to you. Both hashtags facilitated conversations about the experience of the individual on 9/11, which provide an interesting frame to explore questions of vernacular and official rhetoric. John Bodnar suggests that vernacular cultures commemorate their experiences, while the official culture appropriates those experiences to serve national ideals.<sup>126</sup> Within this context, where new media allows any Twitter user to publically broadcast their own experiences in 140 characters, the separation of the two groups is complicated.

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<sup>126</sup> Bodnar, *Remaking America : Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*.

The data was collected using the search engine from a website called Topsy ([www.topsy.com](http://www.topsy.com)). The company that operates the website, Topsy Labs, Inc. describes the site as “fast-indexing technology” that “ingests massive amounts of authored content from the world’s largest social networks and our live-ranking software applies influence algorithms to social data, identifying the most important content seconds after it has been posted to the social web.” The “most important” content is determined by influence, which the company defines as a measurement indicating the “likelihood that, each time you say something, people will pay attention.”<sup>127</sup> Influence is indicated in two ways; how often a user is cited in other tweets and the influence of the people citing. As a search engine for the social web, Topsy can be used to find information to which a large number of people are being exposed. As a method of data retrieval for an academic study, it serves to provide a sample of tweets. The algorithm highlights tweets from users who are often cited in other tweets. Thus, these users are very active users of Twitter and to some extent, are popular with other users.

As the Topsy site returns a maximum of 100 tweet results per search, the searches were segregated by hours as to retrieve the maximum number of tweets at peak times. Using Topsy’s default time settings, the search parameters begin September 11, 2011 at 12 A. M. Pacific Time until 11:59 that evening. Within these restrictions, the search for the #onSept11 hashtag returned 745 tweets and the #wherewereyou hashtag returned 394 tweets. These are not comprehensive collections of all of the tweets using the hashtag during this time, but a sample selected according to Topsy’s algorithm.

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<sup>127</sup> Topsy Labs Inc., "Influence on the Social Web," <http://www.topsylabs.com/social-signal/influence-on-the-social-web>.

Although scholars in rhetorical studies have studied blogs and websites, the extremely brief text of a 140 character tweet provides a challenge for rhetorical criticism. In this chapter, I do not perform a close textual analysis of the content of each tweet. The dynamic nature of social media belays such an approach. Instead, I approach each hashtag as a collective text and seek to describe, interpret, and analyze the ways in which these hashtags were used and themes that emerge. In the next section of this paper, I give an overview of each hashtag separately, before describing the ways in which they were used.

### **Remembering 9/11 through Hashtags**

Megan Garber, writing for the Nieman Journalism Lab, discusses the beginnings of the #wherewereyou hashtag started by *The Washington Post* for the 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Soon the hashtag, which in its original formation encouraged tweeters to share their own 9/11 experiences, was trending. Melissa Bell from *The Washington Post* is cited as saying, “I think the fact that we have a brand like *The Washington Post* pushing the conversation helped a lot, but I think that the Twitter hashtag was something people responded to because everyone felt really passionately about it.”<sup>128</sup> The next year, for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the hashtag was still circulating. News institutions or bloggers in Ireland, Malaysia, and New Zealand promoted the hashtag. Out of a total of 395 “influential tweets,” less than 50 tweets were retrieved each hour. In some cases, significantly less as the number of tweets tapered off toward the end of the day. For

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<sup>128</sup> Megan Garber, “#Wherewereyou: Wapo Puts the Humble Hashtag to Work,” Nieman Journalism Lab, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/09/wherewereyou-wapo-puts-the-humble-hashtag-to-work/>.

example, 89 tweets were retrieved from the hour starting at 8 A.M. Between 5 and 12 P.M., only 33 tweets were retrieved.

The origins of the #onsept11 hashtag are unclear, but what is clear from the tweets covered in this section is that several organizations, such as NPR News and NASA, used and promoted the hashtag. Only three results appear before 8 o'clock in the morning and all three promote a time capsule of online 9/11 coverage from the *Boston Phoenix*. However, after 8 A.M. the number of tweets picks up and searches for each hour after 8 A.M. return between 50 and 100 tweets. The peak hours, where the maximum number of results was reached, were 12 to 1 P.M. and 2 to 3 P. M.

I have identified three main categories of usage for these two hashtags: publicity, maintenance, and expression. Tweets that perform publicity functions link to other places on the web, thus introducing followers to content outside of the 140 character limit imposed by Twitter. By maintenance, I refer to tweets that encourage other users to share their memories by using the hashtag. These tweets may or may not include links to external websites. Expressive tweets are those that include personal memories, emotions, or ideas of 9/11, usually without linking to an external website. I now discuss each of these categories in turn.

### *Publicity*

The first category of hashtag usage under discussion is that of publicity. Tweets that contain links to external websites, where the link connects to a site that does not simply promote the hashtag, fall under this category. Some users posted links to articles/blog posts written the day of or soon after September 11, 2001. For example,

Mike Ward (@screen\_scene) writes “#Wherewereyou on #Sept11? Working as earnest young news hound localizing tragedy for @richmonddotcom:<http://t.co/qZsM3w7>.” Jeff Gates responds to NPR’s Andy Carvin’s question of where were you by using Carvin’s handle @acarvin. He says, “@acarvin I was blogging back then. My post from that day:<http://t.co/bjEPAQ0> #OnSept11” Some users linked to other websites where they had already written personal recollections that extended beyond 140 characters. The political activist group, Rock the Vote collected memories from their staff and published them on their websites. Contributor, Shaun Cooper tweets “Check this out: <http://t.co/jDQOmv4> I'm the 13th one down. @rockthevote #NYC #WTC #FDNY #NYPD #wherewereyou.” Girlfriendology, an “online community for women” links to a post on their site by contributor Jennifer Williams. They publicize it as, “A girlfriend & mom's thoughts on 9/11 <http://ow.ly/6qVRX>#wherewereyou.”

Still other Twitter users linked to pictures, news articles, or other websites. Megan Lighttell, tweeting using the handle of The Displaced Nation, a website she writes for, tweets “#onSept11 I was standing in a field in Ohio painting this piece: <http://t.co/kH1ClgR> I never finished.” The link connects to a photo of a landscape painting on Facebook. @photoassasin writes “Silverstein decided to ‘pull’ or demo, building 7 that afternoon<http://t.co/kWfiCdf> #onSept11.” The Youtube video covers the collapse of World Trade Center building 7 and the controversy surrounding comments made by the building’s owner that make it sound like the building fell for reasons other than the plane crashes. Another example of this is Irene’s tweet. Irene (@khairinarazin) posts “REMEMBERING 9/11: @nicholasleezt was having his 5th birthday party when

9/11 happened. Here's his story:<http://t.co/wzb2vMN> #WhereWereYou.” The link connects to a picture of a card headed “Birthday memories” which tells the story of a little boy’s birthday party being interrupted by news of 9/11.

Other users linked to sites where they had contributed their memories to a collection. For example, Jen Wagner posted a link to a public Google document. She says, “#onSept11 You can read my response and 328 others at<http://t.co/mrHphjE> (link corrected)” In this spreadsheet entitled “9/11 Remembrance Form: Sheet 1” responses to questions like “Where were you when you heard of the events of 9/11/2001?” and “Who was the first person you shared the news with?”<sup>129</sup> There are also sections where participants deviated from the form response. The header of the spreadsheet’s final column states, “If you would like to share any ofther memories of the day, please do so here.” Many of the participants chose to include more of their 9/11 story in this space. Another example of links to external collection sites is the link to [where911.com](http://where911.com) retweeted from @where911 by at least two users. Katharinangel from France joined the conversation. She tweets “Where were you on 911? #OnSept11 <http://t.co/SXiX08I> via@Where911 la croix-rouge, bois-guillaume, france.” Where911.com has no clear creator and is integrated with social media so that individuals can post their 911 memories to the site using Facebook accounts. These tweets publicize external sites and encourage followers to do something, read, or participate on those sites. The main purpose of tweets in this category is to link to external content of varying types.

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<sup>129</sup>Unknown, "9/11 Remembrance Form: Sheet 1," Google Docs, [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?hl=en\\_US&hl=en\\_US&key=0Ajs6b3XF1u0kdExCVFZOSVY4bTZ2ZEdSTmdxVklxZVE&output=html](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?hl=en_US&hl=en_US&key=0Ajs6b3XF1u0kdExCVFZOSVY4bTZ2ZEdSTmdxVklxZVE&output=html).

### *Maintenance*

On both the #wherewereyou and #onSept11 hashtags, some users tweeted about the hashtag. This is a form of publicizing the hashtag and encouraging other Twitter users to add their own story. Tweets that only comment on the hashtag without adding personal stories were included in this category, which I have labeled maintenance of the hashtag. As I discuss below, some of these tweets included links to external sites where the use of social media or these hashtags in particular are discussed. By tweeting the question, these Twitter users bring the hashtag to a wider audience, the people who follow their tweets, and encourage them to participate.

Several users, including Carlos Pinheiro, Joffin Joy, and Karen Woodham, tweet the brief message “Where Were You #OnSept11.” Out of the 745 tweets on the #onSept11 hashtag, 166 contain the phrase “where were you.” Several link to other sites, including articles about the hashtag on the website for *New York Magazine* and TechCrunch. *New York Magazine* tweeted about the hashtag and included a link. The link led to an extremely brief, though over 140 character, message, encouraging readers to use the hashtag #onSept11 to share their stories. Not only did this present a link to their magazine in a legitimate hashtag that was growing in popularity, but it also generated traffic on their website

Erick Schonfield wrote a post about the #onSept11 hashtag on the technology news website, TechCrunch. The link was disseminated through the TechCrunch Twitter account, “Where Were You #OnSept11? <http://t.co/MK61bVE> by@erickschonfeld,” which Topsy identifies as “highly influential.” Other tweeters also spread the word by

retweeting the link. Some including their own story in the same tweet like Steven: “RT @TechCrunch Where Were You #OnSept11?http://t.co/X7k30wT - I was at work in dwntrn Boston. Rmbr every1 in the cafe staring at the TV.” The TechCrunch article begins with the claim that “September 11 is our generation’s JFK assassination: everybody remembers where they were on that traumatic day.” It introduces journalists who are actively using #onSept11, like Jeff Jarvis and Andy Carvin. Tweets that share this link spread the word about the hashtag with the context provide by the TechCrunch article. Chris Muscles shares the link, asks the question, and includes a quote from the article. “Where Were You #OnSept11?: September 11 is our generation’s JFK assassination: everybody remembers where they were... <http://t.co/bpiXFU7>.”

On #wherewereyou, several organizations and individuals asked those reading their tweets to participate in the collective remembering. *The Today Show* made an announcement through their Twitter account: “Many of you are sharing memories of watching that morning #wherewereyou.” *The Star*, an English-language Malaysian newspaper, reached out to young followers through their “youth platform” R.AGE. “Young Malaysians are sharing their memories of that September night 10 yrs ago. How did the 9/11 attacks affect you? #WhereWereYou.” Other users wrote simple messages, like Andy Gustavson’s “#NeverForget #WhereWereYou.” Tweets like this get the hashtag out to a wider audience, performing maintenance that keeps the hashtag going.



### *Expression*

The third category of tweets I have identified in the #onSept11 and #wherewereyou hashtags are expressions of individual memories, thoughts, or emotions. Many are answers to the questions the hashtags seem to be asking. Where were you on September 11? Others post reflections that deal with emotions or thoughts beyond geographical location. This category is the most diverse, as the content of these tweets covers a variety of topics and a spectrum of emotions. To illustrate the range and diversity of ways in which these hashtags have been used to commemorate 9/11, I have selected four aspects of the responses to discuss.

Some Twitter users focus on geographical location. Some are very specific, such as James Andrews (@keyinfluencer), who gives a time and exact location. “8:36am Decamp Bus #66 Montclair, NJ headed towards the Lincoln Tunnell #September11th #WherewereYou..” Others, like this one retweeted by @drakepolirpt include poignant context, “@NBCNews I was in my HS library (senior in HS) watching the events on tv, w/ me was a friend who would later die in Iraq in 05 #wherewereyou.” Other users give an idea of the location but focus on a memorable moment of the day, such as this tweet from the Smithville Library Twitter feed (@seslibrary), “#onsept11 my linguistics prof would not cancel class. Said that terrorists wanted to disrupt our lives; he refused to succumb to terrorists.” Others were in New York and paint a picture of what they remember. Jennifer Smiga (@inbloombuzz) says “@nprnews Paper fell on us exiting the train. Such a blue sky. I still dream clouds held the buildings up. Bless those lost.#onSept11, 2001.”

Some of the responses to the hashtags discuss actions or emotions, rather than locations. Tweets like Christine Griswold's (@sonorathoy) touch on emotion.

“@acarvin #onSept11 Running a ChildCare center. We kept children unaware and nurtured as long as we could. Some parents did not return.” Ilyssa Frey (@tufts91) tweets, “I was pregnant with my twins, watching the scene unfold from home. I was afraid that my babies would feel my sadness.#onSept11.” One Twitter user who calls himself Spike (@misterspike) states “#onSept11 I tried frantically for 3 hours to reach my buddy@FrancoOrdonez in Manhattan until I learned he was OK.” Kelly Cheadle (@craftyb) tweets “@acarvin #onSept11 I was playing with my 3 month old, snapping pictures of him in a little red polka dot onsie, marveling at his smile.” Ainy Kazmi states, “#onSept11 I was the pregnant Muslim mom of a 1yr old, horrified by what I was seeing on TV and worried about my children's lives.”

Other users note how they heard the news. @Tacomamma writes “#onSept11 I woke up to my husband saying ‘We're under attack!’ - I thought he meant our servers.” Hamad Al-Sabah (@hmalsabah) says “#OnSept11 I heard the news as I finished H.S. volleyball practice in #Kuwait . My dad was in NY at the time. Thank god he was okay.” Jennifer Ramos (@Jenifary) was watching the news. “I was getting ready for work and saw the horror unfolding Fox 11 News. #wherewereyou.” The Today Show (@todayshow) retweets a message from Margaret Greene (@mesgreene). “RT @mesgreene I was 24hrs post c-section, watching the today show, my nurse was taking my vitals. I was an emotional new mom. #wherewereyou.”

Finally, other tweets included in this category do not always discuss the experiences of the individual tweeting but are expressions of thoughts and emotions about the day. I have selected some examples that discuss Muslim experiences of 9/11. Rashad Al-Dabhagh writes, “#OnSept11 a classmate skipped class because she was too scared to show up with her hijab on.” Jessica Luther tweets “I remember my friend in college, a Pakistani Muslim, praying that the hijackers wouldn't turn out to be Muslim.” Others do not remember a friend or a classmate, but make more general expressions, such as Ruwayda Mustafah who says, “#onSept11 Muslims didn't realise how it will change their lives, gradually our children became ashamed of their names, heritage & brown skin.”

Both the #onSept11 and #wherewereyou hashtags evoked a variety of responses. Some of the Twitter users in this study focus on the place they were, the emotions they felt, what they were doing, how they heard the news, or what memory stands out ten years later. All of these are forms of expression that can be separated from other tweets that publicized links to other sites or performed a maintenance function for the hashtag.

Extending the curator metaphor, all three categories demonstrate ways in which the curatorial role can be enacted through Twitter. If, as I'm arguing, the hashtag can be seen as a dynamic artifact or exhibit, collectively created and existing in mostly transient form, then curators have several ways they can contribute and change the rhetoric of the hashtags. The first, publicity, could be seen as the curator reaching into the archive to pull in certain items that are important enough to help tell the story of 9/11. By bringing in links to external sites, curators then promote the discourses within those links. What I

describe as the maintenance category might be the curator inviting other curators to take part in shaping the exhibit. This differs from the publicity category where curators are using artifacts, links in this case, and adding their own interpretation. By spreading word of the hashtag, curators are inviting other Twitter users to take up the curatorial mantle and tell their story of 9/11. The expression category seems to be the expected result of introducing other curators to the hashtag. Curators can add links to other sites, but the idea of the questions is to add your own interpretation of 9/11. Of course, this expression is not always pure. The expression of 9/11 memories here, as in the other chapters, is colored by the fact that discourses about 9/11 have been circulating for ten years. As I discuss below, these descriptions of personal experiences may seem fairly unencumbered by institutional influence, but remembering on Twitter is not simply vernacular voices sharing vernacular memories.

### **Entanglement of Vernacular and Official Rhetoric**

Twitter is seen by some as an open forum for the masses. Jonathan Weber says “In just five years, Twitter has evolved from a 140-character punch line into a universal, all-purpose newswire, free and open to almost anyone, throbbing with the pulse of the planet in real time.”<sup>130</sup> As a tool to express the vernacular voice, Twitter can be a powerful platform. Individuals can tweet about the people they talked to on September 11, 2001, the places they were on that Tuesday afternoon, and the emotions they felt. By signing up for a free Twitter account, users can publically express their memories of 9/11. By using hashtags, they can participate in a collective remembering where their

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<sup>130</sup> Johnathan Weber, "The Hashtag Revolution," *Rueters Magazine* 2012.

story is included. However, the vernacular voice does not stand alone, unencumbered by power structures or official rhetoric. In this next section, I explore the ways in which expressions of vernacular memory are entangled with official memory within the context of the #onSept11 and #wherewereyou hashtags.

One way in which official discourse manifests in the presence of news organizations such as *The New York Times*, NBC affiliates, Minnesota Public Radio, National Public Radio, and others tweeting with institutional handles. Megan Garber reviews a study by Pew's Project for Excellence in Journalism which found that all 13 news organizations studied as of November 2011 used Twitter to disseminate links and drive traffic to their own websites.<sup>131</sup> Within the context of these hashtags there were certainly instances of news organizations tweeting their own articles. MSNBC (@msnbc) shares a link to one of their articles. "Biden, Clinton, Bush to attend Flight 93 memorial <http://t.co/jaQy9tg> #wherewereyou." The British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, requests Twitter users to tweet their memories using #wherewereyou. J.B. Cooper (@jbcooper) a writer for *The Daily Telegraph* website tweets "Send me your 9/11 memories and i'll try to get them in the @telegraph live blog." As mentioned above, *New York Magazine* and TechCrunch both share links to articles that discuss the hashtag.

In a way, it is ironic to discuss the concept of vernacular rhetoric from tweets that only consist of those Topsy considers "influential." Tweets are put into this category by Topsy's search engine according to the number of retweets and the quality of the retweets (influence of the people retweeting). This means that this analysis does not

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<sup>131</sup> Megan Garber, "Twitter, the Conversation Enabler? Actually Most News Orgs Use the Service as a Glorified Rss Field," Nieman Journalism Lab.

cover all of the tweets that used the hashtag on September 11, 2011- only those that were retweeted many times or retweeted by influential people.

Do, as Topsy claims, more people pay attention to these messages than others? If so, the question for this study becomes are those people who are considered “influential” in a privileged position? Are they official rhetors? The answer is both yes and no. Some of these influential Twitter users can be considered official rhetors, especially those who have ties to media outlets or have obtained celebrity status. However, because definitions of official memory must be situational, it would be fallacious to claim that all of the “influential” tweeters are in a privileged position within the context of 9/11 memory. I argue that being influential on Twitter according to Topsy standards does not equate with a privileged position within the 9/11 memory archive. It would be an impossible task to parse out who is official and who is vernacular within Twitter and within the context of 9/11.

Several of the people who are featured prominently in the data set are public figures with ties to media or entertainment institutions. For example, Landon Donovan (@landondonovan) is a soccer player for the Los Angeles Galaxy. He has almost 800,000 followers and is a “highly influential” tweeter according to Topsy. On September 11, 2011, he simply answered the question, “09-11-2001. I was on a plane in Ontario, CA...heading back to San Jose after visiting my family for a couple days #wherewereyou.” This tweet was retweeted over 25 times, while some of the other tweets that contain a personal memory like this are never retweeted. It seems he was also reading other responses because later another tweet states “Thanks for all the crazy,

sad and amazing stories. Keep perspective and believe in the good in the world.

Goodnight#wherewereyou.” This tweet was retweeted 34 times. As a celebrity, Donovan can play an influential role within this context; however, his authority only extends to his story. If he had to be categorized as vernacular or official, he would be a vernacular rhetor but not without power to shape commemoration.

Andy Carvin, a journalist with NPR news, appears one hundred times in the #onSept11 hashtag. Some of these tweets are his, but most are individuals tagging him in their tweets. They are responding to his prompts to add their story using the #onSept11 hashtag, and his interaction with them adds to their influence. For example, Lousia Smith, a student at Pennsylvania State University, is not an influential tweeter according to Topsy standards. On September 11, 2011 she tweeted “@acarvin That's what I assumed when I heard a blurb on the radio: it was some small, lost private plane. #onSept11.” Citing Carvin increases his level of influence, but does nothing for Smith’s. Yet, Carvin was retweeting some of the tweets on the hashtag in which he was cited. Thus, the reason that Smith’s tweet is included among the “most important content” is because her story was retweeted by someone influential. Andy Carvin, acting on his personal Twitter feed, may not be clearly defined as an official rhetor but in this exchange, he cannot be fully divorced from the institution he works for.

In any case, Andy Carvin takes on a unique role within the #onSept11 hashtag. Early on in the day, he retweets some of the tweets using the hashtag, like Smith’s. He brings vernacular stories to a wider audience. Sometime after 10 A.M., NPR News (@nprnews) tweets “Thanks to everyone tweeting their experiences #onSept11, 2001.

NPR's @acarvin is RTing highlights, so pls be sure to include the hashtag.” Around this time, Carvin begins to curate a collection of tweets from the hashtag. After 12P.M., Carvin tweets “@nasnas\_here @tacomamama @kgs @techsoc I've included your #onSept11 tweet in my Storify collection. Thanks” The long line of citations link those users with this tweet and, essentially bring this collection to their attention. Storify is a platform that “helps its users tell stories by curating social media.”<sup>132</sup> The collection created by Andy Carvin using the @onSept11 hashtag contains approximately 92 tweets. Most of these tweets were included in my data sample because someone influential, Carvin, retweeted them. All of these tweets were included because someone was paying attention to them. Here, the vernacular is being collected by an individual associated with an institution.

One tweet from *The New York Times*, linking to an interactive map, is one of 5000 of the most influential tweets to date, with 160 people clicking that retweet button.<sup>133</sup> Out of the 395 tweets collected from the #wherewereyou hashtag, over 90 linked to this map. The map is an extension of the “where were you” question, allowing users to pinpoint their locations and add comments. What made this map different from any of the others is that you could also color code your pin based on emotion. The choices are finite: angry, fearful, unmoved, secure, or hopeful. The tweet originated from @nytimes. “#Wherewereyou on #Sept11? Plot your location on our interactive map and tell us how you feel now<http://t.co/IO5vDOP>.” Here, vernacular memory meets official.

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<sup>132</sup> Storify, "About," <http://storify.com/about>.

<sup>133</sup> Topsy, "@Nytimes Tweet 11 Sept 2011," <http://topsy.com/twitter.com/nytimes/status/112880045999132672>.



The map was created by a national newspaper and when the link is shared, it drives traffic to their site. Yet, so many individuals share this piece of institutional memory. For example, Alain Matalon (@orbital281) tweets “On #Sept11, I was in Manhattan, NY at 2 World Financial Center. @nytimes map: [#911plus10#wherewereyou](http://t.co/MxunoVA).” Retweeting does not necessarily mean that they participated in the collective remembering on the *Times* website. Joe Berkowitz, a book editor, retweets but adds his own commentary. “WHY? NO! RT @nytimes #Wherewereyou on #Sept11? Plot your location on our interactive map and tell us how you feel now <http://t.co/iJNobFX>.” In a similar fashion to individuals who linked to blogs in order to expand beyond the constraints of Twitter’s 140 characters, Twitter is used simply to publicize a different medium of memory. However, this map has its own limitations and is not an expansion of vernacular expression but a site that funnels that expression into a form created and approved by the institution.

In this section, clear distinctions between vernacular and official rhetors have been blurred. Celebrities have some influence within contexts like this, when they are telling their own stories. Their vernacular voice has a greater chance at being heard than others. Journalists, who, as I argued in the previous chapter, can perform the role of official curator within the pages of a newspaper, play a more ambiguous role on Twitter. Where Carvin is identified as an individual, gives his own story, and highlights other vernacular stories, he cannot be considered either purely vernacular or official. Rather, Carvin’s role within the #onSept11 hashtag straddles the two groups. The third example of how vernacular and official voices are tangled shows how content created by an

institution is used and disseminated by vernacular actors. In the next section, I explore what this means for understandings of the role of a vernacular curator.

### **Twitter Users as Vernacular Curators**

Twitter facilitates remembrance in particular ways, and these avenues of commemoration open up new ways in which the vernacular voice can be heard and reassert its authority to also tell stories of 9/11. I argue that this happens in two ways. First, when individual users tweet their personal memories of 9/11, they are asserting that their story is important and reaffirming discourses that vernacular stories of 9/11 matter. Second, the interactive features of Twitter allow individual users to promote and share other discourses of 9/11, reifying particular narratives of the event.

Individual users who added their stories or recollections of 9/11 to the hashtag participated in an act of collected remembrance. Most clearly, the tweets that fall under the expression category are individuals tweeting their own stories, thoughts, and emotions. This vernacular participation is very personal and often very specific, like @drakepolirpt's post where he begins "I was in my HS library" or Jennifer Smiga's "I still dream clouds held the buildings up." Many of the tweets use first-person pronouns, although some cut the pronouns out to preserve characters. Christine Griswold simply states "running a childcare center" and the personal pronoun is implied. The sharing of these very personal memories in a public forum is, in a way, epideictic rhetoric where the vernacular rhetors work collectively to build a community and define their part of the 9/11 story.

Remembering through Twitter allows users to connect with others. For example, Roy Lee (@roylee25) tweets “"@MikeRossMTV I was in my 8th grade math class #i'llneverforget #wherewereyou #GodBlessAmerica">rt U would be #BeatItNerd I was in gym class.” Many assumptions could be made about the relationship between these two young men, including that they may know each other in person. What we can see clearly is that one user (Mike Ross) used several hashtags, including #wherewereyou, to introduce his part of the 9/11 story to other Twitter users. Another young man (Roy Lee) sees the tweet. The @MikeRossMTV starts a conversation, where Mike Ross is alerted that someone has tagged him in a tweet. With the hashtags still included, the message is still visible to those looking at the hashtag. The personal message even includes another hashtag (whether that hashtag was used by others is something I could not determine). I delve into this tweet because it illustrates how something as simple as a hashtag could be a conversation starter and how people who were young at the time of the attacks can participate in a forum like this.

By giving their responses to the question “Where were you on September 11?” users like Mike Ross and Roy Lee are participating in a collective remembering. Each individual story may not be something that is included or remembered by the public ten years later. Each individual story is limited in its ability to influence the archive. However, as a collective, these tweets draw on the already circulating discourses that 9/11 affected everyone. As a collective, the vernacular voice has the power to reify that discourse and assert its authority. If 9/11 was a national tragedy, who better to describe the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of that day than the nation?

The three conversational features of Twitter help to facilitate a public remembering together which allows individual users to interact with official rhetoric. By retweeting, conversing, or using hashtags, Twitter users can share official rhetoric or even converse with official rhetors. Retweets allow users to share particular stories or websites with others. When this link is an interactive map on *The New York Times* website, Twitter users are encouraging their followers to join the collective and add their own memory. The most common way the TechCrunch article was shared was with a quote from the first line. 47 times tweets like Peter Radzio's (@peterradzio) emerged in this hashtag. "Where Were You #OnSept11?: September 11 is our generation's JFK assassination: everybody remembers where they we... bit.ly/oU1o43." The conversational aspects of Twitter also allow vernacular users to speak directly to public figures that they do not know in person. By writing @landondonovan, Alex Harrison can ask the soccer player a question about what happened when he was flying on 9/11. His answer: "Yes, went back to gate and evacuated airport RT@alexharrison13: @landondonovan did they clear the plane or what happened? #wherewereyou." The third conversation aspect of Twitter, hashtags, allows spaces where strangers interact due to subject matter. All of these features allow individual users to actively participate in a collective remembrance of 9/11.

Twitter can open up avenues for vernacular influence and facilitate interesting ways of remembering 9/11, but these functions are limited by the medium in particular ways. Although, as I have shown, not all users chose to answer the question with a response of a location, the question of the #wherewereyou hashtag and the fact the same

question is implied in the use of the #onSept11 hashtag severely constrain the available paths down memory lane. Dana Allen-Griel, a curator with the Smithsonian Institute Museum of American History, writes about the museum's struggle to build a forum for vernacular memories. "People ask one another "where were you?" as a way to *start* a conversation. But usually what the asker wants to hear is more than just an account of what you were doing or wearing or how old you were."<sup>134</sup> The museum is trying to find ways to go beyond the question because it is rather limited. What makes Twitter so open and interactive, the brief messages, can also constrain the quality of the remembrances. In this way, Twitter can define the boundaries of remembrance.

Although Twitter has its limitations as a medium of commemoration, the vernacular voice has power as a collective, this collective voice insists that personal memories of 9/11 are important no matter how far away from the tragedy the individual was, and the interaction between users opens new avenues for vernacular memory to have some influence. Thus, individual users on Twitter can enact the role of curator of the discursive archive of 9/11 memory by participating and adding their own remembrances of 9/11 or by interacting with other individuals, official or vernacular.

## **Conclusion**

I discussed how Twitter users used these commemorative hashtags, how weighing this participation by "influence" illustrates complications for the vernacular/official divide, and how the entanglement of vernacular/official discourses is

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<sup>134</sup> Dana Allen-Griel to O Say Can You See?, 2011, <http://blog.americanhistory.si.edu/osaycanyousee/2011/09/beyond-where-were-youlets-talk-about-september-11.html>.

facilitated by the technology. Looking at this within the context of the discursive archive illuminates epideictic and deliberative roles for vernacular curators. By looking at mediated memory through the lens of the discursive archive, we can examine social media without concern about its permanence. What is happening on Facebook, Twitter, or other social media sites illustrates how the archive is shaping discourse related to that event.

As the archive is fluid, structured, and influenced by power, understanding the rules that maintain it within social media could take many directions. When anyone can post, the forum for collective remembrance is open. The platform has some limitations but opportunities as well. The way that we understand power in this situation is through the interactions of official discourse with the vernacular. In this, it is the moment of participation without great concerns for permanence that allow the fairly free flow of a public remembering together.

The themes that emerged in the previous chapter are still present in this one, but they are not always so explicit. Individual voices are important, but they hold the most power as a collective. The personal remembrances of all those participating hold greater meaning in the moment of remembering together through the Twitter hashtags. Although few users urge for unity, this participation is in a way, an act of unity. Although many of the remembrances seem to focus on memories of that day, others mention events that have happened since like the wars. The narrative of 9/11, although not exactly the same as the other chapters, is similar here in that it's still the story of how the American people were affected and how they are dealing with the aftermath of 9/11.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, I examined the way that the organizers of the local Pflugerville ceremony curate narratives of 9/11 that focus on courage and sacrifice by interacting with official discourses. As curators that cannot be defined as clearly official or clearly vernacular, their ambiguous position illustrates the need for understanding the curatorial role within fluid definitions of vernacular and official memory. In the second chapter, I examined newspapers surrounding the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I argued that the professional practices of journalism, like news values, constrain commemorative expression but also open outlets for journalists to use commemoration in order to make arguments about future decisions. In this case, memory of 9/11 is used by journalists to commemorate the event by highlighting the impact of the past 10 years, prominent individuals, and events that are geographically or emotionally proximate to the audience. That commemoration, in turn, reifies certain ways in which 9/11 is remembered such as who and what parts of the country are part of the 9/11 story. The third chapter investigated the use of memory in the social media context of two commemorative Twitter hashtags, #wherewereyou and #onSept11. A somewhat transient medium becomes a dynamic and interactive forum for the expression of public memory by allowing users to share their stories and to participate in collective remembrance. These three chapters examine a variety of texts from different directions in order to illustrate the variety of roles for the individual in changing contexts and the diverse ways that public memory is rhetorical.

## **Commemoration of 9/11 on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

When all three chapters are examined together several themes emerge related to the nature of commemoration and commemoration of 9/11 in particular. These themes include individual voices being more powerful as a collective, an urge for unity that can quell dissent, and a focus on the ten years since 9/11. Discussing the ways that this rhetoric shapes public memory of 9/11, also illuminates some of the factors of the 9/11 story that are missing from these commemorations.

All three chapters have illustrated that the voice of individuals can be powerful, but that those voices have more force when connected to a particular collective. We can see that individuals tied to institutions have power to influence and participate in collective memory, whether they act as a curator or not. For example, presidents and their activities related to 9/11 are included within at least two case studies. In Pflugerville, presidential rhetoric takes its most overt form in a quote from Bush. In the newspapers, presidents write articles, articles are written about presidents, and articles about memorial services give presidential itineraries. Individuals tied to particular places, like witnesses or family members, also have a prominent place in the 9/11 story. In the newspaper chapter, this is revealed through the news value, Prominence, and the articles feature the stories of these groups. In the Twitter hashtags, not everyone has a story tied directly to events, but when the individuals do have a link, it is highlighted. When twitter users like @misterspike give their 9/11 memories as trying to reach someone who was in the World Trade Center, they are establishing their link to those events. The strength of the tie to the places and events of 9/11 can be a way of



establishing the authority to tell a particular story. However, by participating in collective remembrance, individuals can still be part of the 9/11 story. In Pflugerville, this participation can take the form of singing the nation anthem. Twitter users write 190 characters to tell their 9/11 stories. In both these cases, the individual may not have authority, but the collective participation can reify or shift discourse about 9/11.

The second theme, seen to some extent in each case study, is the urge for unity, a manifestation of adherence to simplified narratives. As discussed, this is most clearly seen in the local ceremony and, to a lesser extent, the newspaper coverage of the anniversary. These motions toward the ideal of a unified nation or community are part of the epideictic bringing together of the audience. The Pflugerville exhortations for unity may reveal fears of fracturing and they leave little room for dissent to be voiced. This is less true for the newspapers, where editorials may bring in narratives that challenge the dominant stories. However, there are parts of the 9/11 story that are not included in the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary coverage, such as the health of first responders or conspiracy theories surrounding the date. The ceremony presents a clear story of 9/11 that is more focused on the courage and sacrifice of the American people. The newspaper had a multiplicity of narratives. Overall, those that were highlighted with the use of news values presented 9/11 as a national issue that affected all Americans within a limited range of emotions, but still impacted certain places or people more than others. Within the Twitter hashtag this urge for unity or simplified narrative is more difficult to argue for. As the chapter shows, there are few tweets explicitly arguing for a narrative of any sort. Rather, it is the act of participating that is important here. The fact that individuals felt they could and

should share their story shows a unifying action. By answering the prompt and using the Twitter hashtag in appropriate ways, many of these users are enacting the discourse mentioned above, that 9/11 was a national tragedy and 9/11 impacted everyone.

The third theme common to all three case studies is also a common understanding for memory studies. Commemorations do not completely focus on the past; rather they are a way for those within the present to use the past in order to do something in the present. Thus, it would make sense that the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 would focus on present issues and the more recent past. The clearest example of this is discussion of the War on Terror. In several places, rhetors assume and reinforce direct connections between 9/11 and America's military endeavors. In the Pflugerville ceremony, this connection is imperative to justify the content of their ceremony. In the newspapers, this connection can be questioned, but the realities of ten years engaged in war are still highlighted. In the Twitter hashtags, the war appears in tweets of users who lost a soldier and that loss has now become the part of their 9/11 memory that they share within 140 characters. Three themes emerge from these case studies, demonstrating reliance on simplified narratives of the 9/11 story that are used to make 9/11 relevant to the audiences of the present day. The curators of these rhetorical texts do so by highlighting certain characters of the story, reifying discourses that give Americans as a collective a way to make sense of their 9/11 stories, pressing their audiences to unite, and by including post-9/11 decade in their commemorations.

## **The Role of the Curator**

In the first chapter, local organizers of the Pflugerville memorial service perform a curatorial role by drawing from official discourses of 9/11 to craft a ceremony that makes an argument for their community. In this situation, the organizers are both the everyday people of vernacular culture and official rhetors with the authority to tell the story of 9/11 for their community. As curators, these individuals have the agency to bring in discourses that focus on the soldier's sacrifice and the courage of the American people. They also have control over the ceremony, establishing their narrative of 9/11 as the only story for the community. Although they have power to construct the ceremony, they are constrained by their own and the community's notion of what is appropriate or expected for a ceremony of this type.

The second chapter examines the role of an individual within an official position, where training and professional conventions may influence the process of curating a commemorative display. As official rhetors, journalists have the authority to tell the stories of 9/11, but the same institution that installs the individuals in a position of power also defines the boundaries of what stories should be told. News values, as part of the journalism process and education, constrain the expression of 9/11 memory and frame a story on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary that highlights the how the nation and certain groups have been impacted, the people and places viewed as prominent, and narrow range of emotions that the journalists and editors believe will resonate with an audience that is emotionally proximate to the national tragedy. This role of the curator differs from the organizers of the local ceremony in part due to their professional status. Writing articles

is part of their position as journalist or editors, their authority is derived from this, and they have resources and constraints from this. While both curators tap into the discursive archive for inventional resources, the journalist can also supplement the already circulating discourses with support from current events and interviews with individuals. Yet, the role of the journalist also differs from the role of the community organizer because an individual article has a different life than a ceremony where hundreds of people attend and participate. While the ceremony is the only one held in the town, the newspaper article is one of many in that paper and one of many papers. The audiences will experience the texts in different ways.

The third chapter reviews the complicated role of vernacular curators on Twitter. The curatorial role in this chapter does differ from the others, because although we can identify institutional or official Twitter users and discourse, there is also some opportunity for individual users to post personal stories. This is the clearest example of vernacular curation in the project. Twitter constitutes a mode of expression that allows individual and vernacular curators to legitimize their 9/11 memories in two ways. By adding their personal stories, individual Twitter users are reinforcing discourse that vernacular stories of 9/11 matter. Also, by interacting with other users, sharing links, and directing attention in particular directions, vernacular curators can use Twitter to reify particular discourses of 9/11. The vernacular expressions are not free from official discourse. They are entangled with institutional influence through interaction with tweets or links. Like curators in the other case studies, Twitter users are also constrained. The technical limitations of the platform, such as the 140 character restriction, shape

expressions into short messages and the norms of Twitter usage encourage participation within the hashtag to follow the standards of twitter hashtags. That the hashtags imply questions also constrains expression by prompting only particular responses or memories.

### **Complicating Vernacular and Official Memory**

As these three chapters have demonstrated, there is a complex interaction between vernacular and official memory, and narrow definitions of the two groups do not allow for rich understanding of the processes involved with this interaction. In the first chapter, we see that authority in a sense can be borrowed to bolster the rhetoric and authority of local ceremony planners. In the second chapter, journalists write in national newspapers, what I argue is a form of official rhetoric. In that sense, national newspapers form an authoritative version of the 9/11 story. Yet in the third chapter, journalists and newspapers have less authority within the context of Twitter. Within this new media context, concepts of authority are more ambiguous. The focus of the remembrance changes with the medium and so does the authority of curators. Thus, the authority to tell the story that makes memories official does not simply originate in the individual telling the story (although some individuals have more power to influence public memory than others) but through institutions and rules that shape the expression of memories in different contexts and across time that, with each reiteration, shape and reify the archive of 9/11 memory.

## **Foucault's Archive and Public Memory**

The distance of 10 years introduces new discourse to the archive and changes narratives that worked soon after 9/11 but may not any more. The archive is not only structured by the general rules of our society, or understandings of public commemoration, but also by professional or institutional constraints that underlie the processes of selection and exclusion. The archive is also structured by the technological constraints of the media through which it translated. Newspapers have a certain amount of space and must decide how to fill it. Twitter enables certain actions, but only 140 characters at a time. A ceremony is timed and must keep the audience's attention. Power influences the structure and the enunciation of statements when certain individuals, due to their position, have more credibility to define the past event and constitute the community to which that event has meaning. Curators manage and guard the archive for rhetorically strategic purposes, reinforcing their own power or investments in 9/11 memory. Using the archive as a framework for memory studies can help us understand how memory is fluid, structured, and influenced by power. It may also help us understand how certain memories or certain ways of remembering become naturalized.

## **Future Directions**

The advancement of this study could be as simple as expanding the selection of texts in any of the three categories to achieve a richer image of what is happening with the archive. News media is gravitating towards digital media, a rich area for future study. Beyond adding news texts, broadening the theoretical scope would be interesting as well. Much of the power of institutions I discussed is tied to commercial interests, such

as Twitter and the news media that are part of an economy that serves capitalist interests. Politics, at a national level, within the newsroom, and within the small town, absolutely have an effect but at this point it is unclear how they manifest in the discourse. How do these realities constrain the archive?

Part of Foucault's theorizing also focuses on what is excluded- a mission that is echoed by public memory studies. This study does not touch on what narratives or perspectives of 9/11 are left out, but those instances might better illuminate the rules of the archive. What about people who are not curators? Are those who have no reason to write a tweet or create a community ceremony disenfranchised by the archive simply due to the public nature of it? The concept of the archive might do more than illuminate the complex relationship between institutions and individuals; it might also help widen the spaces where the vernacular has power to shape the nature of public memory.

## **Conclusion**

A reader of an earlier draft of this project mused that the common theme seems to be a statement: we are all victims of 9/11. This is an interesting observation, for although I agree that a narrative like this has been underlying all three chapters, I am nervous to entertain it. In a way, thinking on this statement presents the dangers of oversimplifying definitions of vernacular rhetoric. While I have tried to show that the vernacular voice has the opportunity to participate in remembrances of public events, I am skeptical of the idea that this is always a good thing. Of course avenues for a multiplicity of memories of 9/11 and other events should be opened and Foucault's archive may help us find the way to unhinge the barriers that keep other voices out.

However, in contexts like the ones I have presented here, the curators are actively reaching out and consciously participating in remembrance. The curators here may agree, to some extent, with the statement that we are all victims of 9/11. However, the questions that remain are what stories and whose voices are not noted in this study because they chose not to speak up on this day? Would those who are apathetic to the date or those that do not feel the same emotional resonance agree? What does it mean if they do or do not?



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